



PORTRAIT OF A SCIENTIST

Life, the greatest stimulus to writing, flashes by us in a continuous series of pictures. Most of these are unrelated and last only a fraction of a second on the retina of our eyes. Hence real photographs and paintings, fixed and permanent so that we can study them, are found to be first-rate things to write about. Since people are always the most interesting to write about, a Portrait of a Scientist, an unusual picture of a noted medical research man is used as our frontispiece. The rugged chiselling of the whole head, the brilliant thoughtfulness of his eyes lead the writer's imagination into attempting to recreate and interpret the worlds of experience and thinking that have gone into their shaping.

Write What You Mean

A MANUAL OF COMPOSITION

F. S. APPEL

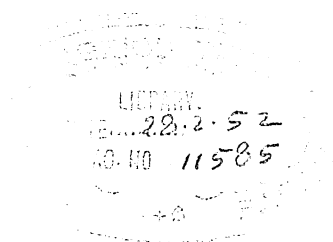
University of Minnesota



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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

Learning to write is important. Your learning to write is a joint job for you and your teachers. You both have, I think, no more important and critical school problem than that of building together courses in the study of English composition. Composition I use here in the basic sense of your getting ready to communicate to other people—by writing, or by prepared speech, or by both—what you think and what you feel. It is clear that in a democracy, wherein every one of us as a man or woman must take part in civic, social and economic affairs, sharing and laboring together for the common good, this communication of knowledge, ideas and feelings about elections, housing, roads, crime, and unemployment is of utmost importance. In totalitarian states of any brand—monarchic, Fascist, Nazi or communist—it is necessary only that king or dictator or their propaganda chiefs know how to write or speak clearly, vividly, and dramatically. It is they who force their ideas, feelings and interpretations of fact or event upon their people through “controlled” newspapers, magazines and books, or through oratory, radio broadcasting and common speech.

But in the United States the different ideals, knowledge and emotions of individuals and of little and big groups must find clear expression. Their meanings must be brought out sharply into the open. Only thus can we understand, compare and modify conflicting

points of view. Only thus can we make wise compromises and devise processes for carrying out the essential united will of all of us. This is the way of democracy. And this way is both implied and stated in the comments and actions of the founding fathers of the Republic, in their condemnation of illiteracy, their launching and support of public schools for the children of all citizens. It is a truism that education is the essence of democratic government. It follows that education in terms of new knowledge, broadened vision and more effective action is worthless unless these can be wisely and rapidly spread to all of us through writing and speech.

On the personal side of our common life the need to communicate our individual notions, impressions and wants is equally pressing. If I am a student in school, I cannot pass a single course unless by recitations, discussions or written papers I can let my teacher know what I have studied, what I have learned and how well. If I am in business or on a job, I cannot sell bonds, books or hardware unless I can persuade the ready buyer through writing or speech that I have something worth his money. If I am a lawyer, I must prepare briefs and argue cases. If I am a surgeon and find a new and better way to do an operation on a gall bladder or a throat with less shock to my patient, I have a duty to describe my new method to other surgeons. If I am a reporter, I must learn skilfully to interview and accurately to write up what ministers and criminals, lawyers and generals, scientists and socialites say and do, and what they mean by what they say and do. If I am an engineer, I must prepare reports on every step of

my work whether it be in the design and building of a new fast transport plane, a giant bridge or a new dynamo. Thus the learning of composition has very real and very vital bearing upon the success of my job.

Again, on the intimate personal side if I am a lonely soul, wanting friendship and affection, I cannot have them unless I learn to tell others what kind of a person I am and why I need, want and am ready for their companionship. Such friendship as we all desire grows richer with the years and makes life a happier thing if I can tell to my friends and by telling share with them the experiences which life brings me. Much of such sharing has to be done by personal notes and letters. A poorly written note of congratulation or a clumsy expression of sorrow at some disaster may wreck and has often wrecked friendships of long standing. On the contrary, a well-written note in these times of crisis widen and deepen and make richer our friendships. Good writing has the extraordinary power also to bring needed money from Dad to his student son or daughter, to lay all the groundwork for a pleasant vacation, to win over a loved one and establish an understanding for marriage. Therefore, composition is of lifelong importance to your personal happiness in the intimate affairs of your daily life.

Robert Louis Stevenson once said that in the breast of everyone there is an unborn poet. By this he meant, I think, that all of us are potential writers and that all of us have a desire to set down our vivid experiences, tragic or funny, so that they may be shared by others. I believe that Stevenson was right because I have seen in the editorial offices of the motion picture companies

in Hollywood and the magazine offices in Chicago and New York the enormous stacks of unsolicited manuscripts in each morning's mail. Somehow the adventures, the angers, the loves and the conflicts out of which stories and movies are made set up a clamor inside us for expression. If we write them down to our satisfaction, we feel a sort of elation and a cleansing. If, however, we wish to tell these stories, to recount these things that moved us deeply, to create a scenario or build a drama, and cannot write them or tell them, our feelings and images dry up and grow stale and sorry in us. Hence for this purpose the learning of composition is important.

Because of these things, in talking with all kinds of people—homemakers, social workers, nurses; salesmen, engineers, bankers, and doctors—about their schooling, I find that their most frequent comments are two. They say either that composition was the “best” course that they had in school and the one that has been most “useful” to them since graduation, or they say rather wistfully that they wish they had had more or better composition courses or had studied harder the ones they took when they took them. All of these people agree that they either did not have enough or good enough training to develop fully their powers to communicate with other people.

Nevertheless all of these people have been through grade and high school and most of them through college and professional schools as well. During their many years of study they estimate that they have spent upwards of 2000 hours in English composition and speech classes. They say that they have written some hundreds

of papers, reports and examinations. They have made many hundreds of recitations and some speeches. They have written hundreds of personal notes and letters and carried on thousands of daily conversations. Yet with all of this formal and informal training to make their ideas and feelings carry across to others, few of these older people will agree that they yet can do the job as effectively as they ought to or want to. They find it hard to organize their thoughts, to discover and set down words and phrases that are crisp, clear, vital and colorful enough to be understood as they are meant by others who read or hear them. They and most of us are like broadcasting stations with first-rate programs but a poor sending apparatus. The ideas and feelings which we possess and want to send out are important, or entertaining, or beautiful, or interesting, or all of these together. But in our sending them they are jumbled, full of station static, or bass boom, or harsh tremolo. Hence our friends, teachers or bosses snap off their receivers. They say that we have a poor or completely rotten program which is not true but which might as well be true since none but ourselves can hear or see how really good it is. Why, then, with all of our study and practice of communication in our own language in school and out, do we write and speak badly?

In part it is our own fault. Usually it is only gradually that we learn to realize how important clear communication is to us. When we are children we tend to think that other things are much more worth doing than studying to write. We think that our English courses are less and other things are more "interesting." We think perhaps that we "can get by all right" with a tiny

little vocabulary and with what grammar and sentence and paragraph structure we already have or can pick up without too much work. Or we find that the job of setting down words so that they mean what we want them to is so tough that we run away "to wait for an inspiration" which almost never comes. Or we let friends of ours, who seem to write more easily than we can, help us so much with our writing that really they do the work for us and get the good out of it. This is like asking a friend to eat our breakfast or play a tennis match or go to the office for us. By these and other means we may have achieved poor, mediocre, or good grades and credits in our English courses but without having learned how to express ourselves.

In part, however, our failure to develop this power is the fault of the teachers and the school system. Both are good, but neither is perfect. The system has required that we take English instead of making its importance to us so clear that we would require ourselves to take all we could of it. There is something in most of us that likes to buck at things that are required of us unless we can see clearly that these required things are necessary, right, useful and sensible. If we see that they are, then we do them anyhow, and there is not much that can stop us from doing them. Therefore, if our schools and teachers had spent a lot of time and thought and effective English on showing us how worthwhile and sensible and useful composition could be to us, we probably would have done a better job of learning to write and speak. But they took it for granted that we knew or would find out, which most of us did

not, and therefore we bucked the requirement and put little or no effort into the study of English.

In the General College, Professor Appel and his associates in the teaching of English have spent a great deal of time and thought in their writing, lectures and teaching on why composition is important to all of us. They did not require English. They said to themselves that they would find out, if they could, all of the ways in which communication by writing is important to our freshmen and sophomore students. They would find out from each class and then show to other students why and in what ways it is important. And they would build the best course they could to teach composition. The results are what we would expect from such a continuous effort over six years built upon all that Mr. Appel and his associates had learned from years of teaching by older methods. In consequence, nearly all of our students choose English. Those few who do not either already write easily and well and get lots of practice in their other college work and personal affairs, or they are missing the writing laboratory because at this time other things they can choose still seem more valuable to them. But most of our students already see the many ways to use what they learn in the writing laboratory not only in doing better and more satisfying work in other courses, not only in getting their thoughts and feelings clear and finding sharp concrete words for writing and reciting and talking with others in college, but also as very vital preparation for whatever jobs they are going to do and for whatever ways they are going to live after all their formal schooling is done. Mr. Appel has, therefore, built this book upon what he has found

to be the importance of composition to more than 2000 college students. And he is helping the other college staff members to ask 1400 young grownups, who used to be students in the University, what importance composition has had and is having for them as they go about their daily jobs, as they live with their families, as they meet their personal cares, as they have their fun and as they take part in social and civic activities. What he is finding from these young adults is being translated daily in the classroom, and much of it is found in this book.

It is not, however, only because we did not see the importance of studying writing and speech that we neglected to study them or failed to profit from them as much as we might have in school. Another reason is that most teachers have never known and do not yet know quite what are the best ways to teach them. This is no criticism of the teachers. It takes years, sometimes hundreds of years, to learn how to do things well. The ancient Egyptians had surgeons who operated on the heads and bodies of their patients. So did Greeks, Romans, and the mediaeval English and Germans. But surely the great surgeons of today know more and have better tools and techniques than did these doctor ancestors of theirs of centuries ago. The surgeons of today know better how to do operations than they did even ten years ago. In the same way, teachers of English, who are really studying the problem, are finding always new and more efficient methods by which you can learn to write. Teachers of former years are not to blame for teaching in ways that now seem crude and foolish, and that did not get the effect that they wanted, which is

to have every graduate able to organize and set down clearly for reading or speaking what is in his mind and heart.

One of the old and ineffective ways of teaching, now beginning to be replaced by new methods, is that of assigned themes on specific subjects. It is common practice in many colleges to permit only one or two impromptu themes and to assign ten or more subjects in a quarter very often on such things as "Why I Came to College," "The Campus by Moonlight," "The Squirrel Habit," and "How Flour is Made." In any given composition section of thirty students, there is not likely to be more than one who finds any of these topics clamoring inside him, asking to be written. But at the very time of the assignment he does have an internal demand to write to his mother to tell her how college is going. He has, too, papers to prepare for a course in science and one in history. He may also be keenly interested in a discussion the class in economics is going to have tomorrow about the Supreme Court or the C.I.O. *vs.* A. F. of L. conflict for which he would like to write out his ideas to get them clear and ready. In consequence, his theme is likely to be skimmed and perfunctory and thus sloppily written. I remember the story of how former President Herbert Hoover nearly failed to graduate from Stanford University because he had not passed his composition. Some wise teacher asked him to prepare a paper of his own choosing on some engineering subject. Mr. Hoover enthusiastically wrote a paper of several thousand words, clearly and with excellent organization. He demonstrated that he could write well when he wrote of the things that he knew and

that were important to him. Thus our students are teaching us every day that we get better writing and faster growth in power to write when the themes come out of the important direct needs and the interests of the students themselves. The teacher may demand as much writing and of as high quality as he may judge will produce the greatest growth and skill in each student, but subjects are better self-assigned.

Another mistake in practice that seems to be corrected for us by a writing laboratory is that of having the writing all done outside the classroom, the teacher's corrections made away from school, and the writer's re-writing and corrections again done in his room or the library or another class. By this process not only are the stages of writing and correcting separated in space but they are split apart in time as well. The laboratory draws them all together. If I am writing such a thing as this preface and find myself not clear about an idea, or tangled up in the structure of a sentence, or fishing for a word or phrase that will not come, I want Mr. Appel or one of his staff near me to help me straighten out and get going again. Certainly I do not want to give him my typed or pencilled sheets, wait a week or two to get them back with his comments written on them or, still worse, some numbers and letters referring to a composition book so that I must look up my errors before I correct them. I want checking, correction, help, and stimulating discussion while I am in the process of writing. It is impossible for me now and was impossible when I was a student to sustain interest and enthusiasm in a short piece of writing such as a theme if it had days or weeks in which to grow cold. There is in the old saw,

"Strike while the iron is hot," real meaning for all of us who write. I observe, when I visit the writing laboratory, that our students think just as I do about it. They write as much as or more than I did under an assignment system. And they rewrite and polish eagerly more than ten times as much as I ever did in school. And it is by rewriting and polishing that we learn slowly and well the craftsmanship of communication.

Finally, in this book Mr. Appel has given full and definite stress to two further vital factors in the learning and teaching of writing. The first of these is the fact that our language of communication, our English, our American if you will, is a living and changing thing. The teacher of an older time, soaked in Latin, drilled in the formalities of Latin and English grammar, filled with Principles of Rhetoric, came often to believe that language is dead, fixed, and sterile; that writing is a game to be played by absolute rules. The teachers and students of composition in these times are almost universally learning to know that language is instead a fiery living thing, boiling up out of the past and over into the future, changing its structure, its colors, its meanings, as people change. The language of the nineteenth century stage cannot be the same as the language of the Hollywood screen, nor that of a Matthew Arnold or a Dickens like that of an Edna St. Vincent Millay or a Pearl Buck. The farmer of today with his talk of bacterial wilt, tractor carburetors, rust-resistant breeding of wheat strains, would sound like one talking a foreign language to his grandfather although both may have tilled the same plot of ground. Since concepts, things, facts, and the thinking and feeling about them

change, the words that express them change too. Thus also must the very structure of the language make its shift. This does not mean that Professor Appel throws overboard all grammar and rhetoric, or that we should do so. It does mean, however, that we should be not only unafraid to follow changes in usage and structure, but should welcome them, use them, test them in our own attempts to write so that we may be understood by those to whom and for whom we write. If I had set down these thoughts of mine in this preface in "pure" seventeenth century English, I am sure you would not only laugh at it but misunderstand most of it. Even Charlie McCarthy, Nelson Eddy and Clarence Stroud can have twentieth century fun splitting a barrel of infinitives together like oysters.

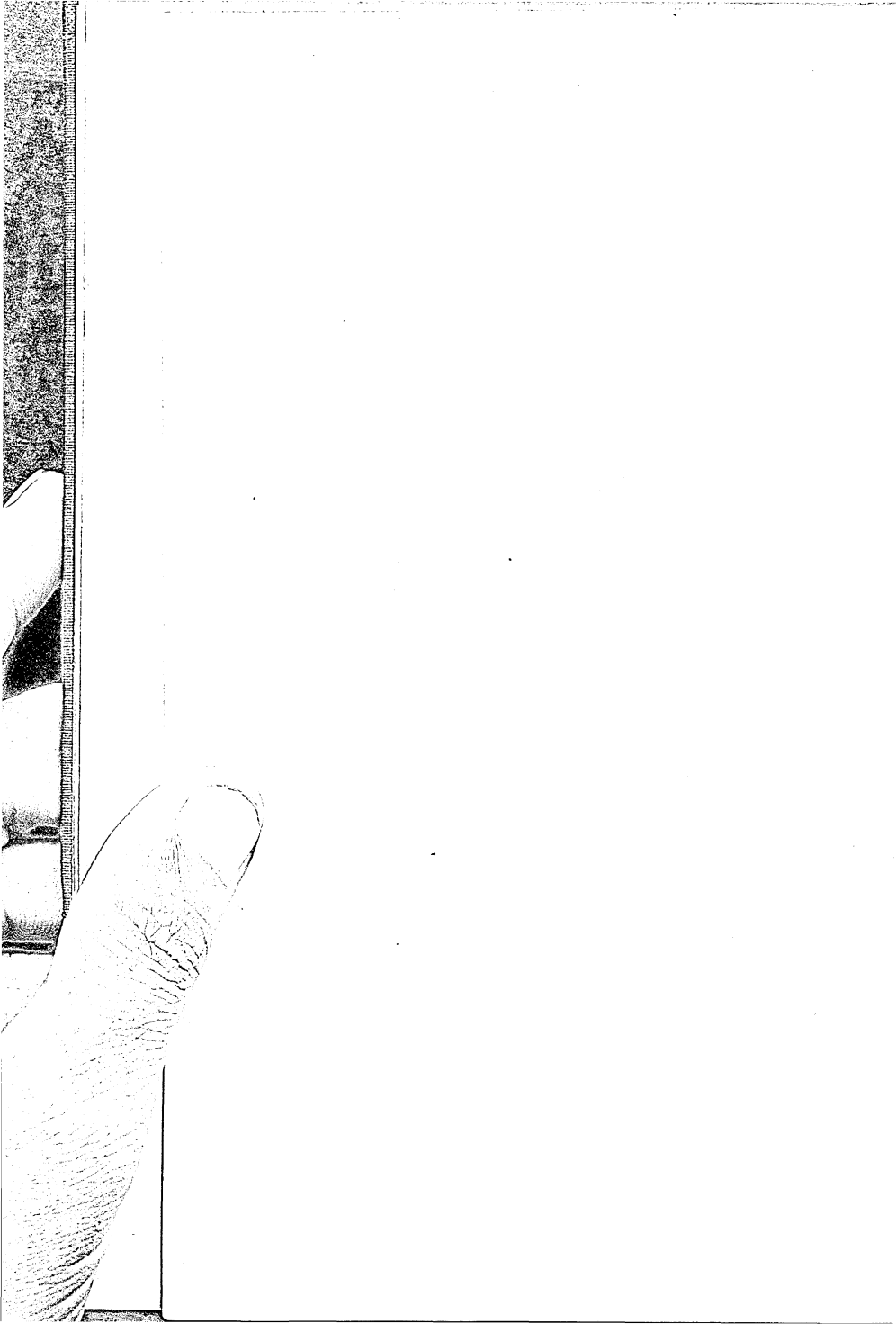
The second of these vital factors with which this book deals is the attempt everyone who writes anything must make to find and use specific and concrete words instead of vague, general and abstract ones. Thomas Henry Huxley in his essays on education urged that every child be taught in school to draw and paint. He wanted this for the children of England not so that she might have more and better painters and etchers, but so that every child could learn to observe things sharply with all his senses and in rich gradation of light and shadow, contrast and harmony in color. He knew that if we see things thus sharply, they are real to us and more easily communicated to others in our writing and speaking. Much of our teaching in the past has gone all the other way. City children have had to do arithmetic problems about acres and rods and sections. Farm children, who will probably never have a cent in their

lives to invest in stocks and bonds, have had to do problems about accrued interest, share prices, and dates due. By working day in and day out for years on these unrealities our minds lose more and more of the vivid sensory imagination they had when we were children. In consequence, we think and therefore tend to write as college students in vague, abstract, and hazy terms. In a very real sense, therefore, this book is an attempt to help us recapture the detailed smells, sights, sounds, and feelings of a past time when they were real to us.

I am glad, for all these reasons, to see this book launched. I do not think it is a perfect textbook, because no perfect one has ever been written. But I think it does give all of us who need to write, who want to write, who must write to gain ends important to us, a freshly thought-out, well-put explanation of a better method by which to learn.

MALCOLM S. MACLEAN.

University of Minnesota,
February, 1938.



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A PREFACE TO TEACHERS

The particular combination of devices for teaching composition that are offered here is based upon long experimentation and has proved its worth in composition classes at student levels ranging from freshmen in high school to juniors in the university and adults in night school. The methods were developed and combined for the purpose of making the student *aware* of the significance and aim of each step, so that he would be less likely to follow methods blindly and to forget, rapidly, what he had learned. Very early in the sequence the student realizes a power to control his selection of details for expressing his ideas, and he realizes, further, that this power is the result of deliberate intent, not merely of the unconscious effort that often produces a good paper but leaves him sorely puzzled when he tries to duplicate his effort.

It is paradoxical that these arbitrary and artificial exercises—after all, we do not actually write according to such directions—should have been most severely tested in the Writing Laboratory of the General College at the University of Minnesota, where the student is given complete freedom to write anything he wishes: letters to friends, term papers and reports for other courses, applications for jobs, orders for radio repair parts, or essays and stories for his own pleasure. The reasons for this mixture of freedom and compulsion are explained more fully in the little manual of suggestions

for teachers that accompanies this volume, but a few considerations repeated here may not be amiss.

Students notably bandy about vague, uninteresting generalizations with no specific examples to back them up. Perhaps the very worst fault to be found in student writing is just this tendency to parade vague general statements, and this tendency results in, as often as from, muddy thinking. But the omission of specific terms and examples that might make generalizations possible on the one hand, or clear on the other, cannot be laid completely at the door of laziness. The students are not *aware* of their own intense need for details, hence they omit them from their own writing. They assume that they are being obvious before they are being even clear. Neither do they realize that the number of details that will heighten interest is a large one before it makes for deadening prolixity. If they finally realize these simple truths, they then complain that they cannot think of enough details for examples—that, in the face of their ability to name everything they see or hear! Yet if we send them to observe a scene, they give us a jumbled mass of general details. They do not know how to control the selection and the presentation of even these general details—worse, they have rarely savored the joy of making words sit up, beg, and roll over. But the ability to name what they see, hear, touch, taste, and smell is there, and this book sets as its purpose to use that ability as a basis for learning to write clear, effective, and interesting English.

Pray bear with me a while longer and do not protest, "Description! There's nothing new in that!", for I agree with you completely. In fact, teachers interested

in teaching description will point out rightly that the exercises do not cover many of the techniques of description, as did a friend of mine, a teacher of English at another institution, who then combined and amplified the Observation and Selection Charts for purposes of analysis. The sequence is designed, rather, to teach other important matters and to lead the student *from* description *to* the more profound and extended expository paper. It is designed to do these things, too, by motivating the student through *a definitely felt power of achievement* as he masters each step.

The detailed discussion in the accompanying manual for teachers makes clear, I believe, how these things are accomplished and how the emphasis is placed not only on observation, description, or vocabulary, but on such important matters as selection in terms of relevancy (without which no thinking can be done), making the abstract concrete, and giving the student a means for judging himself the quality of his specific and concrete vocabulary. Description becomes the by-product of the exercises instead of the end product.

To these ends the presentation attempts to make the student realize that he is not hopelessly ignorant when he reaches the course but that he possesses a deal of knowledge that he has only occasionally applied satisfactorily for his teacher and satisfyingly for himself. When he discovers that he can readily understand the devices he is studying and readily see for himself the advance he is making, he begins to find pleasure in his work and to take pride in it. Without such student motivation all of us are helpless to make the results of

our teaching last beyond—or even reach—the time of the examinations.

Upon these matters of study and of attitude are built the transition to and the study of expository paragraphs. And the transition is surprisingly easy to make, for is not the border line between the methods of writing description and exposition at times very tenuous? With this background, the student is well prepared to face the problems of the longer paper. His combining of the methods is made easier, too, because he finds that the very first thing he studied—the relation of general to specific words—offers him a means for organizing the paper and removes much of the perplexity and distaste he felt toward outlining.

Parenthetically, let me say that the continual effort here to keep the material seemingly familiar to the student is responsible for the avoidance of the usual nomenclature of composition texts, since although he has studied them in grade after grade, the special vocabulary has never taken hold of him.

The development of the sequence suggests, then, why the devices for writing narrative do not immediately follow those for writing description. I have felt that a comparatively short period spent in writing intensively to learn the important techniques of observing, selecting, and organizing should precede a much longer period spent in writing extensively. The short assignments require a considerable amount of work for both student and teacher, and, if the study is limited as I suggest to about five weeks, the students' interest does not die. It is ironical that in the Writing Laboratory students have felt so keenly their new found power to say what they

mean with these descriptive methods they have continued to use the charts long after we have passed on to other things. When, however, they do go on to longer papers, they dilute the sirupy richness of detail that characterizes the shorter papers.

There remain two other considerations, namely, the use of student papers for illustrations, and the omission of a detailed study of grammar and mechanics.

Not the least of the reasons for including student instead of professional writing as illustrative material has been the insistence by students that they profited most from the reading of other students' papers aloud in class and silently in study, because those papers were closer to them in subject matter and in the methods of writing. Close to the students' own experiences, and therefore reachable and surpassable, these papers provoked competition. Certainly essays by Stevenson, Conrad, or Mencken stimulate students—a not unimportant matter, but all too often the students feel helpless to emulate the style of these writers or else make a miserable mess of their efforts. Far better than a few scattered professional examples that might be included here are the excellent anthologies available for stimulating, supplementary material.

But valuable as the classics may be, we find that they do not work as a steady diet; therefore, I should like to urge that more use be made of current publications, both books and magazines, as supplementary readings, because students do read them and do respond to the stimulus they give. Anthologies, we discover, thwart the very aim for which they were made. The collection, categorizing, and suitable labeling of essays or stories

give the students a sense of unreality about them, an unreality not present in the freshly read magazine story, article, or poem. In fact I am not sure that the anthology is more a handy teaching device for teachers than an effective learning device for students. By the use of anthologies, students are made to feel that good short stories, good novels, and good essays never appear in current magazines, in spite of the fact that many writers now considered great first appeared in periodical literature. To lead students to great literature do we not have to begin frequently with writing that is not? Students are sensitive to criticisms of their choices of reading. To condemn the five-cent magazine snuggling in their brief cases or lying boldly on their desks is to lose some of their confidence and respect. Yet when I have asked a student to write an article like the one that interested him in one of these same magazines, he has turned to it with a will.

Finally, the language of current publications is that which they see and hear daily—*their native, living language*. Surely we have not begun to tap these resources for motivating students to speak and write well!

As for a detailed study of grammar, even a casual examination of this book will reveal that “usage” has been made to include much that ordinarily would come under grammar. In the Writing Laboratory, it has been our practice to discuss grammatical problems as they arise in the students’ papers; and to stimulate their thinking about grammar—language—as a living thing, “. . . something that is not always consistent or perfect, but progressing and perfectible—in a word, human” (as Jespersen has said), we have placed on the

shelves more than two dozen different manuals and composition books which the students may consult freely. When, as often happens, a student finds inconsistencies existing between the statements of two grammars we turn to current publications to find what conclusions we may draw from the usages there. In this manner, the students make their own grammar books and learn how and why grammars are written. In large measure the study of grammar ceases to be, for these students, esoteric. This study of many grammars is completely in keeping, too, with one of the highest aims of education—that of teaching students not to be “one book scholars.” Why must students be told to consult *the* grammar when they are forbidden to limit their studies to one book in all other studies? Why should not the assigned readings for composition courses include also many books of grammar and composition as well as of literature?

The place of grammar, however, has in recent years been the subject of much discussion. Perhaps no better brief statement of the function of the study of grammar can be had than that appearing as Chapter XI, Part I, “Some Particular Aspects of the Teaching of English,” in the remarkably readable committee report, *The Teaching of English in England*, familiar, I know, to most of you. In Section 256 appears these statements:

If grammar is the necessary introduction to all linguistic study, then grammar must be taught to all who are to make a study of language, more particularly those who will learn the language of the Classics or of foreign countries. If, on the other hand, a knowledge of grammar does little or nothing to improve the speaking or writing of the mother tongue, then it ceases to be essential for children who do not require any linguistic study. For practical purposes, all that will be re-

quired is the creation of a habit of correct speech, and this can be effected through the reading of literature and the writing of composition.

Teachers who are faced with teaching students who will require a knowledge of grammar may use this book with any of the countless manuals of grammar that are available. I should prefer to use a grammar like Jespersen's *Essentials of English Grammar*, were such a grammar written for students in the first or second years of college work.

No defense should be required of the discussions and recommendations in this book concerning colloquial English, because of both the place that colloquial English holds in cultivated speech and the more extended use of it that appears in current magazines and books. *This book does not, it should be noted, urge the use of colloquial English to the exclusion of standard literary English. Its aim is to inculcate the discriminative use of both standard colloquial and standard literary, or formal, English.* I protest so vehemently because some readers of the mimeographed preliminary edition of this book failed to observe the distinctions I had made between the functions of each. I hope that my treatment of the subject in this edition precludes any such misunderstanding.

F. S. A.

University of Minnesota,
August, 1937.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A writer of a text on English composition is much at loss to trace his indebtedness. Not the least of debts probably is due a great teacher, Dr. Charles Sears Baldwin, for his contributions to the teaching of composition. I hope that I have approached the simplicity, clearness, and conversational informality of his books. Perhaps I have merely gilded the lily in attempting to modify some of his procedures, but I have done so to reach more elementary students than those for whom Dr. Baldwin wrote. In making the modifications I have had the generous cooperation of Mr. F. S. Beers, Examiner and Executive Secretary for the University System of the State of Georgia.

To Dr. Charles Carpenter Fries, Editor of the *Oxford Early Modern English Dictionary*, I wish to acknowledge the valuable aid he has given me on the (at present) ticklish questions of usage. To Professor Joseph M. Thomas, Director of Freshman English at the University of Minnesota, I owe a debt of long standing for the ready ear he has always turned to requests for advice and directions in teaching composition. To Dr. I. A. Richards I am indebted for much of Part III in Chapter IV, the discussion of meaning, from his many works, as well as from suggestions he made at a conference called by the Rockefeller General Education Board at Washington in March, 1936. To Dr. Clarence B. Hilberry of Wayne University I am grateful for extended criti-

cisms of the first mimeographed form of this text. I am happy, too, to acknowledge the many valuable suggestions and the illustrations furnished by the goodly number of students enrolled in the course.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the enthusiastic co-operation of my colleagues in English in General College, Miss Lorraine Kranhold and Mr. Edgar Weaver, and of former assistants, Mr. Charles Kopriva and Mr. Howard Lampman. They have helped to develop the methods presented here, and they are agreed that these are effective teaching instruments. Special appreciation is due Miss Kranhold who contributed many valuable ideas to the writing of the book and gave much of her time to the selection of students' papers for the illustrations.

An indefatigable experimentalist (and the amateur photographer who furnished the photographs for our illustrations), Dr. Malcolm Shaw MacLean, Director of General College, insisted upon and made possible the severe test given these procedures in the Writing Laboratory of General College at the University of Minnesota. For his encouragement and cooperation I am profoundly grateful.

CHAPTER I

USING YOUR NATIVE LANGUAGE

This book was written to help you use your native language.

I share your fears of not being correct in speaking and writing as I share your pride, also, in being interesting and "up to the minute." Being correct *and* up to date depends, as we shall see later, much on who and where we are. For example, you and I have found that in Boston we must ask for strawberry "tonic" instead of strawberry "pop," if we don't want to cause smiles at our expense. Because in school I had pronounced "slough" in "The Slough of Despond" to rime with "cow," I pronounced the word that way in North Dakota, but I found that the people there made it rime with "too." In spite of the newspaper headlines, I remember to say "fraternity" when at a fraternity house for lunch. In a lecture, I must not use so old an expression as, Some students have "bubbles in their think-tanks." When the attendant-chef-manager in the hamburger shop asked me, "With?", when I entered such a place for the first time, I wondered what he meant, but ask him, "'With' what?" and he proved ignorant? Never! . . . Fortunately I like onions.

Why be correct? Well, in the instances given above,

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we try to be correct because we want to be understood, we want to please, and we want to be interesting. Correct language means that what we say is precisely understood by the listener or reader, and it may go farther and interest and please him. In the light of the appeal of advertising today, I suppose some people would say that the ultimate achievement of correct language is to sell something.

Most of the instances I have given must be learned from listening to what is said by people around you or from being aware of what actually is written in the books and magazines you read. And, come to think of it, where else can you learn about language? Oh, dictionaries! Grammar books and composition books! But where do you suppose the writers of those dictionaries and composition books studied language? Well, you are right. They could not easily travel around the whole of the English-speaking world and listen to everybody and read every book. But they did have many people do just that. Many readers, many listeners sent in to one place what they found people said and wrote, and those items were all sorted out and made into orderly groups so that you and I could benefit by them. That is just one reason, however, why dictionaries go out of date and fail to be entirely reliable sources of information. Just as slang phrases change rapidly, sometimes disappearing completely, sometimes becoming respectable citizens in the English language, so other words change and have different meanings. Dictionaries record the state of the language at the time

the dictionary was published; they also record what former meanings of words were to help us to understand the present meanings. Grammars, likewise, record how groups of words in phrases and sentences take certain patterns if they are to have meaning and interest for us. Obviously they cannot record patterns of usage that arise *after* they have been written. We have to keep our eyes and ears open for changes in language and not depend entirely upon dictionaries or grammars if we are to be correct, interesting, and pleasing, for it is important for us to realize that a study of the meanings of words and of grammar should grow from the living language. Rules should be considered not first but last.

If you had now to start at scratch in learning how to write and to speak English, you would have a rather disheartening task ahead of you. On the contrary, you have a great deal of information about your native language. You have spoken and written English for many years; you have studied English in school. It has not been, for many of you, a foreign language. Whereas after the first year of study of, say, German, you would know the meanings of little more than one thousand German words, you now know the meanings of from thirteen to twenty thousand English words! Using English clearly, effectively, and interestingly should not, therefore, be a complete mystery to you. You may realize you have some difficulties with writing and speaking. These troubles should be overcome by applying what you already know. This book is de-

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signed to guide you, through simple methods, to a conscious, deliberate use of your present knowledge and to lead you to a more self-satisfying expression in writing and speaking.

Most frequently, I should say, the frustration you may have felt when trying to write arises from not getting your money's worth out of all the aids to writing that you have. Perhaps you have let the aids work you instead of making them work for you. Or, and this is perhaps even more important, you have been content to have the aids to writing do only small, insignificant jobs for you. It is not as absurd as it might seem to compare this situation to that of buying a beautiful, high-powered automobile for the sole purpose of jacking up a rear wheel and putting a long belt around it to drive a washing machine! And topping that off by inserting the crank and turning the engine and washing machine by hand. It would be just as absurd to buy an unabridged dictionary only for finding the correct spelling of words, or to expect the teacher of English—a highly trained specialist—to do nothing but proof-read papers for spelling and punctuation. Just as you expect a doctor to treat the break in an arm before he treats the superficial scratches and bruises so you expect the teacher of English to treat the major problems of the breaks in the expression of your ideas rather than the superficial scratches of misplaced commas.

To let a magnificent vocabulary of many thousands of words lie passively in our minds without making it

serve us is also not getting our money's worth. When in our reading we come across a word like "frustration" we know what it means, but often we do not make use of it in writing. Or to put words on paper without having them say what we want to say is also cause enough for a feeling of frustration.

What, then, does our problem amount to? We have paper and pencil, dictionaries, grammars, teachers, we are alive and the world is full of ideas—where do we begin?

Fortunately, we are in the middle of things and have a choice of many ways to begin. The methods suggested in the next chapters are only a few, but they are presented to you in this book because many students of writing before you have been like you, have wanted and tried the same things, and have found these methods useful, satisfactory, and *satisfying* to them.

CHAPTER II

SAYING WHAT YOU MEAN—FIRST PHASE

Interest Grows with Clear, Sharp Details

Unless a book, a movie, a scene, is interesting, obviously we pay little attention to it. Our interest begins, frequently, when we cannot quite see or hear something, but we pass judgment on it when we can see the parts or hear the details of the sounds that make it up. If the details are good details, we can examine them and accept or reject them for whatever purpose they were intended. We crowd closer to a parade, for it is not sufficient that we see the floats and marchers, or that we hear the music, from a distance. We lean forward in the dimly lighted room and peer at our friend to see whether he smiled when he made a remark. At concerts, at plays, at movies, at lectures, we get seats near the front, if we want to miss nothing. In books of hobbies, we turn the pages eagerly, first to the illustrations and plans and then to the detailed instructions. The amateur cook at camp would be helpless if the detailed directions "place in boiling water for ten minutes or open and serve cold" were not on the can of beans. We become concerned, at least momentarily, if someone says, "There's a button off your cuff," "Your slip shows," "You've a run in your stocking," "Your hat is on back-

ward," "Look out! You'll spill your coffee!" and we do something to set matters straight as soon as we can.

Clearness of detail and interest go most often together. The blurred, vague, dim object or idea usually merely arouses our curiosity without satisfying it. If someone says, "How sloppily you are dressed!" we resent the remark, but we want to know in detail why the remark was made. We want *specific* information. The answer, "There's a button off your cuff," permits us to pass judgment at once: "Oh, is that all!" If your friend tries to get you a "blind date" with his cousin by saying, "Aw, come on! She's a swell kid and darned good-looking," you may not be much interested . . . you have to study math. But when he adds, "She's an ash blonde, has blue eyes, long curly eyelashes, a full, cherry-red mouth . . ." why, that's different!

No matter where we turn, we find that though our interest may be aroused by the tantalizingly vague image or statement, our interest is not satisfied. Further, we cannot pass judgment on the image or statement or move to definite action unless the image or statement becomes clear—*detailed*. The reverse is likewise true, we cannot satisfy our reader's interest unless we are ourselves clear in our statements. If we are trying to bluff in an interview, we purposely choose words that may have several meanings in the hope that our prospective employer will select the meaning that answers the question. When we want to give our best impression, we are careful to give precise, detailed explanations of our training and experience.

On the other hand, conversation with a friend does not ordinarily demand as careful a use of words as would a technical discussion of religion, history, radio building, printing and developing pictures, dietetics, or human biology. Yet even in the talk with our friends we all too often so carelessly choose our words that there are misunderstandings.

"Why didn't you say so, then!"

"I did say so!"

"You did not! You said . . . !"

We all recognize the situation.

Being clear, being interesting—*saying what you mean*—is less a matter of acquiring a huge vocabulary than it is of using carefully the words we already know and of applying them to the situation at hand. When confronted with a misunderstanding like the one just suggested, we backtrack and say what we meant in the first place. If we bring into the light and examine what *change* takes place in our choice of words as we make clear our first meaning, we shall track our game down. Being clear and interesting is not, really, a difficult matter.

A common expression will serve as an example: "When he reached his *destination* . . ." Now *destination* could refer to—oh, thousands of things: a railroad station, a city, the goal line, a room, a front door, an office, the bridge of a ship, a kitchen sink, a pot of flowers to be watered, an ash tray, a chair, a box, a rendezvous with a spy, etc., etc. The meaning of *destination*, then, may include all the meanings listed, as

well as many more. Why not write in the first place, "When he reached the bridge, . . .", "When he reached New York, . . .", "When he reached the waterfront, . . ."? Are not the specific words clearer and more interesting? *Waterfront* certainly suggests more than *destination*. *Blue eyes, long curly eyelashes* as details are clearer than the vague generalization *good-looking*—and, I warrant, are more interesting!

How can you tell when you have chosen clear and interesting details? Do you have to study word books (dictionaries, thesauri, etc.) to learn long lists of detailed words? No; not, certainly, to begin with. Just because *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* lists under the general terms *disjoined* or *separated* such a fascinating series of words as *cut adrift, loosened, divided, subdivided, cut, sawed, snapped, cleaved, slit, split, splintered, chipped, cracked, snapped, broken, torn, burst, wrenched, ruptured, shattered, hacked, hewn, slashed, whittled, lacerated, scrambled, mangled, gashed, hashed, sliced, torn to pieces, torn to tatters, minced*, you need not immediately begin to swallow word books leaf by leaf. You have enough words of your own, because you can name almost everything you see or hear wherever you may go. If a writer is not interesting and clear, you can wager a sizable sum of money that he is not naming the things he is talking about. If he is not naming things, he probably is not very observant of what is about him. He fails to taste the cheese he bites into; he fails to see the parts of the new car; he fails to notice the curve of a girl's

eyelashes or the sparkle in her eye. He has only a blurred impression of these things.

But even if you name things, you may still not have exactly the words you want. A simple device, however, unlocks the first door. We can all of us set up a scale of words that will tell us when we are being specific and concrete. The interesting and clear words in all of the examples given so far are of this sort. They name the particular things we are talking about, and they make pictures in our mind's eye. As we have seen, we want to avoid words that include too many meanings; we want to select words that have the fewest meanings. "Five" obviously includes "four" and "one"; if I have had *five* letters from a friend, I obviously have had *four* and *one* or *three* and *two*. If, however, I have had only *four*, I have not had *five*—yet!

How to Select the Specific Word

In the several series of words or phrases that immediately follow, you will notice that as you read from left to right each word includes all of the words that are to the right of it but not any of those to the left of it. When you reach the last word to the right, you may be hard put to it to think of some further word that does not include any of the words to the left.

Scale of Words from General to Specific

Vegetation—woody plants—trees—oak trees—white oaks

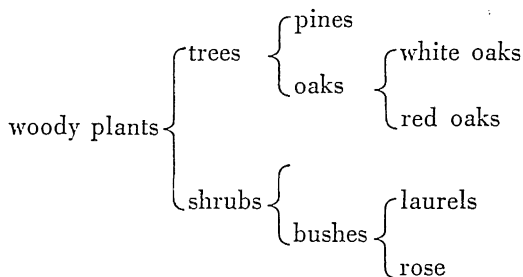
Habitation—dwelling—house—little house—bungalow

Vegetation—woody plants—shrubs—rose bushes—white rose
bushes

Our scale does not always have to be set up with groups of five words. Often our minds travel directly from the general to the best specific or concrete word.

destination—goal line
beautiful feature—blue eyes

Words are specific or general only in relation to other words. Is *vegetation* general or specific? Careful! It is general in relation to *tree*, because *vegetation* includes not only trees but grasses and shrubs, and all plant life. *Vegetation* is specific, however, in relation to *things*. By expanding a series slightly the inclusive meanings of the more general words appear.



The specific phrase becomes concrete when it provokes a mental image of physical sensation. "A juicy slice of lemon" is likely to provoke a mental picture of the actual slice of lemon suggested by the words, and further may actually make our mouths water. The concrete phrase appeals to one or more of our five senses as eloquently as the battered hat of the blind beggar appeals to our purse.

The *change* that took place in our choice of words

when we tried to make clear what we meant when our friend misunderstood us was this change from *general* terms to *specific* or *concrete* terms. Instead of using words that had several possible meanings, we used in our explanation only words that had limited meanings, and, since we wished to be interesting as well as clear, we used specific details that appealed to the five senses, that is, that were concrete.

If I have made myself clear up to this point, then you will have understood so well that you can demonstrate your mastery of the simple principle by doing the problems that I now pose to you.

- I. Directions: Rearrange each of the jumbled series of words so that word or phrase No. 1 in your list is the most general and the last word or phrase is the most specific or concrete. Here is an example of what you are to do.

Jumbled: 1. trees, 2. vegetation, 3. burr oaks, 4. woody plants, 5. oaks.

General to Specific: 1. vegetation, 2. woody plants, 3. trees, 4. oaks, 5. burr oaks.

- A. Jumbled: 1. strode, 2. walked, 3. went, 4. moved.
General to Specific: 1. went, 2. walked, 3. strode, 4. moved.
- B. Jumbled: 1. serge, 2. worsted, 3. suiting, 4. material.
General to Specific: 1. material, 2. suiting, 3. worsted, 4. serge.
- C. Jumbled: 1. barriers, 2. hedges, 3. boundaries, 4. laurels.
General to Specific: 1. 2, 2. 1, 3. 2, 4. 4.
- D. Jumbled: 1. gave, 2. tossed, 3. threw, 4. put in motion.
General to Specific: 1. 4, 2. 1, 3. 3, 4. 2.
- E. Jumbled: 1. plants, 2. trees, 3. woody plants, 4. willows.
General to Specific: 1. 1, 2. 3, 3. 2, 4. 4.

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F. Jumbled: 1. highway, 2. way, 3. road, 4. lane.

General to Specific: 1. 2, 2. 3, 3. 1, 4. 4.

G. Jumbled: 1. creek, 2. body of water, 3. stream, 4. water.

General to Specific: 1. 4, 2. 2, 3. 3, 4. 1.

H. Jumbled: 1. widened, 2. opened, 3. yawned, 4. increased.

General to Specific: 1. 2, 2. 4, 3. 1, 4. 3.

II. Directions: Consider each of the words in the numbered lines below to be a very general word. In the spaces to the right of each word write successively more specific words or phrases until you have reached the most specific word or phrase you can think of. Each of you may arrive at different answers.

General Word: 1. Things

General to Specific: 2. vegetation, 3. woody plants, 4. trees, 5. oaks, 6. burr oaks, 7. ———.

A. General Word: 1. Things

General to Specific: 2. Animal, 3. 2-legged, 4. bird, 5. bird, 6. bird.

B. General Word: 1. Moved

General to Specific: 2. move, 3. walk, 4. stagger.

C. General Word: 1. Habitation

General to Specific: 2. house, 3. apartment, 4. Colony.

D. General Word: 1. Affection

General to Specific: 2. like, 3. love, 4. infatuation.

E. General Word: 1. Institution

General to Specific: 2. school, 3. university, 4. high school.

F. General Word: 1. Emotion

General to Specific: 2. Violent emotion, 3. anger, 4. hate.

G. General Word: 1. Conduct

General to Specific: 2. Verbal, 3. ———, 4. ———.

Having a method of selecting our words and phrases does much to help us to say what we mean, but, as you

probably have suspected, does not answer the problem of putting words and phrases together in a paper. Most of the examples that have been given above are unrelated images or ideas. We are not content, in this complex life of ours, to speak and write as primitive people conceivably may have: "Curly brown dog?" "Curly brown dog!"; "Nibbled (scratched, chewed, lacerated, tore, tore asunder, tore apart) lean white leg?"; "Ugh!" Our ideas are more complex; our pictures are more complete.

The rest of this chapter will be concerned with the selection of specific, concrete details for giving clear and interesting images. The next chapter will deal with the problems of the development and presentation of ideas. Our problems and procedures will be clearer if we examine an extended example.

We can learn from the amateur photographer—the "minny fiend." Returning from a trip, he shows us some pictures that he has nursed through the developing, enlarging, and printing room. "Here's a view of the valley, the creek, and the old mill. I took it from the hill to the north. The old mill doesn't show much there, of course, but here's a picture of the waterwheel. Isn't it clear? You can even see the handmade nails in the bracing! . . . This next snapshot would have been a good picture of the inside of the mill itself, showing the huge stone that ground the grain, but I forgot to turn the film and took a picture of Jim right over it! Fortunately I took another view of it . . .

here it is. . . . Oh, darn it! I forgot—this one was out of focus. . . .”

The miniature camera enthusiast has some distinct advantages over us wielders of pen and ink. He can snap, snap, snap the shutter all day long, if he can afford to. Developing a length of film with three good pictures on it is as easy as developing one with seventeen. He simply throws the bad negatives away. To bring out the best finished pictures from his best negatives, however, means spending much time, thought and careful work manipulating the lights and shadows. We have to be rather careful with our first “negatives,” for we get our prints almost at once. Nevertheless, our procedures, our problems, our aims, are much the same.

From the camera enthusiast’s conversation, several things are apparent: (1) frequently we take an over-all or general picture first and then some close-ups, (2) we must point and focus our camera carefully on the scene we want, and (3) we avoid overlapping images.

In writing we do much the same: (1) we give a general statement or impression and then specific and concrete details or examples, (2) we try to keep one point of view sharply before us, and (3) we avoid the confusion that results from trying to give two images at once.

Let me point out, too, that we have to have a scene to photograph (*something to say*), we select details from the whole scene that we can reproduce sharply and interestingly, and we take pictures (or notes) to keep the image ever fresh.

A Request

Consider, please, the detailed procedures that you will be asked to follow in this chapter and the next as technical training in pencil-and-paper photography. At first you will be required to use only certain films, printing papers, and developers; you will be required to take elaborate precautions. But as you follow the requirements strictly, you will find yourself questioning the wisdom and accuracy of some of them, and you will protest, "That isn't what the professional photographer does! And his pictures are much better than mine. I think that I can improve this method and take some short cuts."

Excellent! Your instructor will let you do just that as soon as you show you understand what you are doing. For example, in the Directions for Writing Impersonal Word Pictures, a few pages farther on, you will perceive very early that your writing sounds suspiciously like that you have read in adventure magazines, the so-called "pulp." Bear with this for a little while. This procedure is a means toward an end and is not the end itself. As you go along you will be impressed again by the fact that good results can be obtained in photography or in writing with any number of materials or methods—some of them not "orthodox" either. If you "overexpose" greatly, your picture may be black. As your facility develops you will use other methods more and more.

It is regrettable that you have to follow these arti-

ficial methods at all; much better would it be if you were able to consult your teacher (the specialist in language photography) as you faced each personal writing problem. That's the way we could learn rapidly and eagerly! But the very organization of educational institutions and the limitations of equipment prevent such instruction; so with your patience and your understanding of our difficulties, we teachers of writing try to help you on your way as efficiently and as enthusiastically as we can.

Recording Details, Chart A

The negative that we shall manipulate and from which we shall print our picture has been named An Observation Chart, and for handy reference called Chart A. This is the chart that we shall fill out at the scene which we select for observation. In selecting our scene, we have a distinct advantage over the photographer: he must have a camera that costs several hundreds of dollars if he is to photograph successfully *a scene of action*. That is the kind of scene that we want, for we can use it best. Scenes of action (ask any movie-goer) are the most interesting. Action does not always, you know, require scenes of fighting or battling, so, since we are to be busy with pencil and paper at the scene, the scene should have enough action to be interesting but not too exciting. Rather, try to select at first a commonplace scene, one that does not naturally extend too long in time. The ones listed below are simply suggestions; you will quickly think of others.

Suggested Scenes for Observation

A roommate awakening after the alarm has gone off; shovels excavating a basement; portions of a football game; a man changing a tire on a busy street; a reception; dinner at home or at the club; washing dishes; a roommate making up her face; a man pausing for a drink at a fountain; an office as the boss enters; a restaurant scene; a roommate shaving; the beginning or the ending of a lecture; the beginning of a concert; a pause in a game of chess or checkers; the first serve of a tennis game; a man tying a woman's shoestring; opening a can of vegetables with a can-opener.

Whatever scene you observe, WRITE DOWN CAREFULLY AND SPECIFICALLY ALL OF THE DETAILS WHILE YOU ARE LOOKING AT THE SCENE. Try to list about one hundred different details.

Any convenient notebook will serve for your field notes, but you will be wise to write across the top of the pages the five senses—sight, sound, smell, touch, taste—so that you will not overlook any details. If you wish, you may reserve a separate sheet of your notepaper for each sense; then you will save time when you come to copy the details into a Chart A like the example that follows. The drawing of such a chart neatly is the work of but a moment. You need not follow the exact plan of the example; merely try to keep the classifications clearly separate.

You will notice that each of the numbered items in this printed example of Chart A consists of a phrase. Each phrase is a *specific concrete detail*, like those that you placed at the extreme right on the Scale of Words

Chart A, For the Observation and Recording of Sensory Details

SCENE OBSERVED: A LOCAL STOCKYARD

SIGHT			SOUND	SMELL
FORM OR OUTLINE	MOTION OR POSITION	SHADE OR COLOR		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. bent handle on pump 2. dented pails 3. frayed jacket 4. <i>large corn-cob pipe</i> 5. patched rubber boots 6. tattered cuffs on pants 7. torn gloves 8. <i>godd, with gleaming point</i> 9. fat swine 10. <i>battered bucket</i> 11. chubby lambs 12. woolly sheep 13. lamb's glowing eyes 14. <i>small wrinkled "cow-hand"</i> 15. <i>large three-ply rope</i> 16. beary-eyed heifers 17. bull's red-rimmed eyes 18. sleepy-eyed pigs 19. <i>huge oak gate</i> 20. stringy wool of ewes 21. long horns of Holsteins 22. short, sharp horns of bull 23. piled corn cobs 24. <i>corner of building</i> 25. ringed noses 26. long-legged heifer 27. ragged piles of hay 28. rippling muscles of bull 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. splashing water 2. <i>oozing mud</i> 3. scattered straw, paper, sticks, manure 4. bull straining against rope 5. wandering cows 6. calves nudging cows 7. steaming nostrils 8. drooping lips 9. cattle running in passageway 10. hogs scrambling in chute 11. sheep's hooves slipping 12. dripping roofs 13. cows chewing cud 14. pigs wallowing in mud 15. calf scampering 16. sparrows hopping under cows 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. green mould on feed 2. moss-covered buckets 3. <i>dirty hands</i> 4. mud-splashed black sow 5. <i>red-bristled boar</i> 6. black-faced sheep 7. black-legged goat 8. brown stained rumps of cows 9. black and white cow 10. gray sky 11. reddish stock-car 12. bright white fences 13. bright yellow and red fire 14. faded red sign on shed 15. shed white building 16. <i>black whiskers on cow-hand's face</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. squealing pig 2. grunting sow 3. bleating sheep 4. lowing cattle 5. calves crying 6. shouts of men, "Get in there," "Whoa!", "Come on!" 7. creaking pump 8. squeaking of hinge 9. low whine of wind 10. cows crunching corn 11. truck backfiring 12. chug-chug of engine 13. groaning of wagon wheels 14. crack of whip 15. <i>hissing, sputtering fire</i> 16. barking dog 17. whinnying horse 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. pungent manure 2. rancid stench 3. sour smell of feed 4. sharp odor of smoke 5. damp air 6. stale sweat <p>TOUCH</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. silvery fence 2. <i>soggy hat</i> 3. cold rain 4. slimy mud underfoot 5. <i>slippery trough</i> 6. cold, wet snouts 7. rain dripping on hat 8. soggy planks <p>TASTE</p> <p>(No details)</p>

(Note: The Italicized details will appear in Chart B)

from General to Specific. Your greatest difficulty in getting enough details will arise from listing *general* instead of *specific* details. If you write down "dirty brown river" and no more, you have missed much. Had you looked closely, you might have found details like "stony shore," "patches of ripples," "dark shadows on the water under the willows," "dim image of bridge in the water," "small waves lapping shore," "wavy outline of log on bottom of creek," and "white foam caught on the reeds." In a room "two dirty windows" may at first be all you note. After a moment you might see "the cracked window shade," "the gray paint curling on the sash," "the twisted latch," "the wavy image of the lamp in the panes," "streaked varnish of the casement," and "the frayed curtain cord."

Details entered under "Taste" should be a part of the scene. For example, if you are eating a candy bar as you watch a blast furnace in operation, the taste of candy is *not* truly a part of the scene. However, if you are eating lunch in a restaurant, the taste of the food is a part of the scene and may be recorded together with the other details you note in the restaurant.

In the printed example of Chart A, the sixth detail listed under Sound is worthy of special attention. Often an occasion arises when you wish to give some indication of the emotions of a person in a scene, yet to project yourself into the being of that person would be a violent change in your point of view. The emotions of another person can be known and shown from two things: (1) what he says, and (2) what he does.

Such outward acts as tapping a cigarette continually on an ash tray, tapping the floor with the tip of the shoe, wringing the hands, jerking a light chain, and needlessly patting the hair in place suggest *nervousness*. Other inner emotions can likewise be suggested. But some emotions defy picturing objectively or impersonally by this method. What a person says often is the easiest means of showing such emotions. "She was angry" tells us something generally, but the amount or degree (the specific information) of her anger becomes dramatic in "She screamed, 'I hate you!'" Not that anger or irritation cannot be indicated by her actions, for example, "She frowned," "She kicked a pillow across the room," "She beat his face with her fists," or "She slammed the door and glared at Sue." Detail 6 under Sound lists the specific sound details. Avoid, then, such general details as "the shouts of men working."

Though you are asked to obtain approximately one hundred details, you are not asked to obtain one hundred details under each heading. Obviously most of the details will be those classified under Sight and Sound; there may not, in fact, be any under the classification Taste. As to the column into which a certain detail should go—that is not important. For example, detail 17 under Form or Outline might just as well have been placed under Shade or Color. But a detail like "nice day" is general and could not be fitted into any of the classifications. If the phrase you are about

to write down will not go into one of the columns, then the phrase is not specific.

Some of the snags you may run into are to be found in the first draft of the student's Chart A, the revised form of which has been reproduced as an example.

When he filled out Chart A actually at the stockyard, he made the error of giving *impressions* instead of the concrete details of the scene. Instead of writing in Chart A "lamb's *glowing* eyes," he wrote "*innocent* eyes of lamb." *Innocent* is not an appeal to the sense of sight but is an abstract or general term. It is explanatory or interpretive—in a word, it is an *impression*. (Of which more anon when we come to Chart B!) He made the same error in stating the following details: "*worn-out* gloves," "*malicious* eyes of bull," "*pitiful* ewes," "*cruel* horns of the bull," "*drowsy* pigs," "*crippled* pump," and "*freshly sharpened* goad." The general quality of the details having been pointed out, he revised them, as the printed Chart A shows, to be, respectively, "*torn* gloves," "*bull's red-rimmed* eyes," "*stringy* wool of ewes," "*short, sharp* horns of bull," "*sleepy-eyed* pigs," "*bent* handle of pump," and "*goad with gleaming* point."

Before you hasten to point out that from the point of view of good description—description that stimulates the imagination—the change, for example, from "*crippled* pump" to "*bent* handle of pump" is a doubtful gain, consider what the purpose of these procedures is. We are learning to use the devices *consciously* and *deliberately*.

Suggested Problem

Make and fill out a Chart A from a bit of professional description which you have found in a book you have been reading or in a story from a current magazine. Excellent descriptive passages for this purpose appear throughout Thomas Hardy's novel, *The Return of the Native* or Owen Johnson's *The Varmint*.

If you do this problem, you will see how important to good writers is the use of specific and concrete detail.

Selecting Details, Chart B

When Chart A has been criticized and revised, your next step is to select the portion of the whole scene that is most clear and interesting. The process is akin to moving pieces of cardboard or a movable frame in from the edges of your negative so as to cut off portions of the picture that do not add to the interest of the central part. Or, and here we desert photographic methods for the moment, we select details much as a mail clerk sorts mail. The letters bearing an Iowa address are tossed into the bags for that state; those for New York into their proper bags, and those for China into those bags. We will set up similar bags or pigeonholes for sorting out our details.

This sorting is much easier than filling out Chart A, for we select our details *from* Chart A. For this purpose, we shall use Chart B, for selecting Concrete Details from Chart A. As the postal clerk needs three bits of information in the address, namely, the city, the street, and the house number, we shall need three

headings for our sorting: (1) the subject, (2) the moment, and (3) the impression.

Name File.....

Date

*Chart B, For the Selection of Specific Concrete
Details from Chart A*

SUBJECT	MOMENT	IMPRESSION

SELECTED SPECIFIC CONCRETE DETAILS

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 7. |
| 2. | 8. |
| 3. | 9. |
| 4. | 10. |
| 5. | 11. |
| 6. | 12. |

(Write the resultant descriptive paragraph in the space below.)

The printed example of Chart B immediately above suggests the form you may use. Space has been left at the bottom of the chart, you will notice, for writing a descriptive paragraph of about one hundred words. The paragraph is not to be written, however, until your selection of details has been criticized.

Let us examine the headings one by one.

The Subject should be the same as that of the scene which you observed. If you had made the original of the printed example of Chart A, then you would copy into your Chart B under the heading Subject what was in Chart A, namely, A Local Stockyard. If the observed scene was a restaurant, then under Subject you would write Restaurant.

The Moment is the brief period of time that included the action of the small scene which you will describe. One way of looking at it is to say that the moment is the instant you snapped the shutter on your camera. It can be fixed in words by such phrases as: Just as the Dean opened the door; Between changes of the traffic semaphore; As a small cloud passed in front of the sun; When the waitress dropped her tray; Just as the alarm went off; After the boat tipped over; When my roommate's razor slipped and cut him; When the ball was kicked; When his belt broke; or, When the plane landed.

The Impression is the most difficult of the three classifications to understand and to state. Think back to the scene and try to choose a *general* word or phrase that tells what feeling you had at the moment—what feeling you had *because of the scene*, not *any* feeling you might

have had. For example, if you were copying down the details of a haying scene, you might have felt weary because you had stood a long time and because writing down details was tiring. But the scene may have impressed you as being *hot*. Your Impression, therefore, was *intense heat*, not *weariness*. If, however, the workers and the horses in the scene showed signs of weariness (or you yourself were working), then your impression might rightly be "weariness" or "fatigue." A river scene in late November possibly would impress you by its "cold desolation." The impression, then, is your emotional reaction (mild or strong) to the scene upon which you looked.

It is suggested that you try to recall your Impression *after you have left the scene*, because you will find the recollection easier than the determination of it at the scene. The "lasting" impressions of scenes are generally the most important and most interesting.

Having decided what your Subject, Moment, and Impression are to be, you go through the details of Chart A carefully and check or underline all of the details that are in keeping with the three classifications. From these that you have checked, you select about *ten* that you will use in your paper. These ten are listed in the fourth column of Chart B. Note that only *one* subject, *one* moment, and *one* impression appear in the chart. It is possible for you to fill our several charts from Chart A, each new Chart B giving another impression.

Suggested Problem

A. At this point you might fill out a Chart B from a paragraph of description as suggested for Chart A. Use as your source some piece of professional writing.

B. Since you are now studying the use of specific and concrete words in relation to other words, that is, in context, you might try the following problems in selecting words that are specific and concrete and also are in keeping with the paragraph in which they appear. Each series of words in the problems is a jumbled series of words moving from general to specific. You may find two specific words or phrases in each series, but one will not fit the sense of the descriptive passage. If the numbered word in the passage is the best word, then place an "x" in the space beside the numbered item below the paragraph. If the best word appears in the series numbered like the word in the passage, then place in the space the letter that designates that word. Here is an example of what you are to do:

Example: The cat scrambled (1) up the tree (2).

1. x a. went, b. skirted, c. climbed, d. jumped
2. d a. vegetation, b. plant, c. oak tree, d. burr
oak

I

Flurries of snow *beat* (1) against the ground, covering it with a thick blanket. A strong, cold north wind *carried* (2) the snow into *piles* (3), some of them four or five feet high. Tiny white frost lines twisted and turned in beautiful patterns on window panes. Icicles hung from *all of Nature's Wonderland* (4). The trees *bent* (5) slowly towards the ground. People *scurried* (6) along the streets, overcoats buttoned, *caps* (7) pulled down over their ears, and mufflers wrapped tightly around their throats. *Cold noses and faces* (8) peeped out from high collars. Occasionally a car sput-

tered and coughed slowly up the street. Dogs and cats, *cold and miserable* (9), scampered into the lee of doorways and alleys.

1. (a) came, (b) seemed to flow, (c) rattled, (d) fell
2. a (a) threw, (b) moved, (c) whirled, (d) put
3. b (a) protuberances, (b) drifts, (c) places, (d) heaps
4. a (a) tree branches, (b) plants, (c) vegetation, (d) everything in sight
5. d (a) moved, (b) fluxed, (c) swerved, (d) drooped
6. a (a) ran, (b) hurried, (c) went, (d) proceeded
7. b (a) coverings, (b) warm coverings, (c) woolen caps, (d) protections of all sorts
8. c (a) visages, (b) faces, (c) red noses and faces, (d) cold, miserable faces
9. b (a) shivering from the cold, (b) with frosted fur, (c) seeking refuge, (d) poor things

II

A girl (1) *snapped on* (2) the light. Picking up her books, she *heaved* (3) them down upon the desk. Then she *pulled* (4) out the *chair* (5) and *threw herself into* (6) it. Shoving all her books aside, she dug into her purse and pulled out a sheet of scrap paper from her *notebook* (7) and *scribbled* (8) a few words on it. The pen scratched. Mary *frowned* (9). She *screwed* (10) off the top to the ink bottle and *pushed* (11) her *empty pen* (12) into the ink. She wrote again, and again the pen *refused to write* (13). Mary jumped up, threw the pen on the *desk* (14), turned off the light, and dashed out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

1. c (a) a pretty young girl, (b) one of my roommates, (c) Mary, (d) the student
2. a (a) turned on, (b) lit, (c) illumined, (d) changed darkness into

3. b (a) put, (b) slammed, (c) laid, (d) threw
4. a (a) dragged, (b) moved, (c) drew, (d) fetched
5. c (a) comfortable chair, (b) armchair, (c) large chair, (d) seat
6. c (a) sat in, (b) fell into, (c) flopped into, (d) moved into
7. c (a) book, (b) text, (c) loose-leaf notebook, (d) practice book
8. c (a) wrote, (b) indited, (c) tried, (d) penciled
9. c (a) was angry, (b) showed anger, (c) felt bad, (d) was impatient
10. a (a) took, (b) pulled, (c) turned, (d) fought
11. d (a) placed, (b) put, (c) held, (d) dipped
12. b (a) pen, (b) fountain pen, (c) writing instrument, (d) stubborn aid
13. — (a) scratched, (b) slid, (c) passed emptily over the paper, (d) balked
14. — (a) table, (b) gleaming piece of furniture, (c) writing desk, (d) empty space

III

Crash! Mr. Smith *lay* (1) in a heap at the bottom of the stairs. His hand *rubbed* (2) gently over his *closed eye* (3) as he glared with the other at a *small red cart* (4) rolling lazily over the *polished floor* (5). He *extended* (6) his legs, then slowly *drew* (7) them back again. Grabbing the door-knob, he pulled himself up. Holding on to each piece of furniture as he reached it, he *walked painfully* (8) into the pantry, jerked open the refrigerator door, and seized a package wrapped in *butcher's paper* (9). He tore the paper and pulled out some *raw steak* (10). He slapped it over his eye, slammed the refrigerator door shut, and limped into the living room. Kicking aside the *daily "rag"* (11), he flopped onto the *comfortable lounge* (12), moaning and muttering to himself.

1. — (a) crumpled, (b) fell, (c) reclined, (d) piled
2. — (a) passed, (b) moved, (c) went, (d) felt
3. — (a) injured orb, (b) angry-looking eye, (c) swollen, discolored eye, (d) precious optic
4. — (a) toy cart, (b) wagon, (c) small red vehicle, (d) cruel red cart
5. — (a) expanse of varnish, (b) varnished floor, (c) floor, (d) scene of the accident
6. — (a) pushed, (b) moved, (c) reached out with, (d) stretched
7. — (a) dragged, (b) pulled, (c) lifted, (d) moved
8. — (a) swayed, (b) felt his way, (c) hobbled, (d) went slowly
9. — (a) wrapping paper, (b) brown paper, (c) heavy brown paper, (d) a heavy covering
10. — (a) juicy, red steak, (b) meat for dinner, (c) meat, (d) steer meat
11. — (a) littered papers, (b) proud efforts of the gentlemen of the press, (c) newspaper, (d) crumpled newspapers
12. — (a) old davenport, (b) green mohair davenport, (c) tired business man's delight, (d) soft product of the furniture maker's ingenuity

C. Now try using in each instance the words, one by one, which you rejected. Observe the effect of these less specific terms.

D. Rewrite the following passage, using only general terms.

An arrow sang in the air, like a huge hornet; it struck old Appleyard between the shoulder-blades, and pierced him clean through, and he fell forward on his face among the cabbages. Hatch, with a broken cry, leapt into the air; then, stooping double, he ran for the cover of the house.

—R. L. Stevenson, *Black Arrow*.

Having perhaps more clearly in mind what concrete details are and how they act in context, let us see how one student filled out his Chart B from his Chart A in preparation for writing the descriptive paragraph. His two charts follow.

Name..... File.....

Date

*Chart A, for the Observation and Recording of Specific
and Concrete Details*

SCENE OBSERVED: MISSISSIPPI RIVER AT THE WASHINGTON AVENUE BRIDGE

SIGHT DETAILS

FORM OR OUTLINE	MOTION OR POSITION	SHADE OR COLOR
1. <i>spreading elm tree</i>	1. little clouds of gnats	1. <i>glowing red sky</i>
2. <i>huge gray sky-scrapers</i>	2. pillar of black smoke	2. <i>wavy blue water</i>
3. sloping banks	3. romping children	3. <i>spectral oil patches</i>
4. large bridge	4. flickering bonfire	4. glowing amber boat lights
5. towering smoke stacks	5. <i>floating coal barges</i>	5. <i>red-topped clouds</i>
6. interlocking steel braces	6. rising bubbles	6. <i>twinkling Jupiter</i>
7. massive dusty masonry	7. boiling, muddy water	7. red tail lights
8. <i>huge gray glacial rocks</i>	8. tumbling paper	8. glaring white headlights of automobiles
9. red university buildings	9. jumping fish	9. <i>pale blue smoke</i>
10. winding road	10. <i>swaying form of bridge in the water</i>	10. blue flashes from trolley
11. rectangular sign boards	11. swimming mouse	11. large black coal piles
12. <i>steep rock cliffs</i>	12. crawling brown ant	12. blue sky
13. large policeman	13. autos on distant bridge	13. smoky buildings
14. baggy suit on man	14. running student	14. old brown house
15. large bundle of books in student's arms	15. soaring pigeon	15. <i>white foam on water</i>
16. <i>rising full moon</i>	16. flitting sparrow	16. <i>green campus</i>
17. big black steam shovel	17. flashing red neon lights	17. old brown cap
18. tall lanky man		18. brown grass
19. large shipping rails		19. large gray stump
20. <i>tree-covered banks</i>		20. brown uniform on street cleaner
		21. old white passenger boat
		22. setting red sun

Name

File.....

Date

SOUND	SMELL	TOUCH	TASTE
1. clattering street car	1. chilly damp air	1. acrid odor of train smoke	
2. humming automobile		2. dank odor of river mud	
3. splashing paddle wheel of boat			
4. <i>rustling of leaves</i>			
5. honking horns			
6. rumbling green bus			
7. rattling of old car			
8. murmur of distant voices			
9. distant hammering			
10. banging of loose board on bridge			
11. roaring truck			
12. screeching brakes			
13. chirping cricket			
14. puffing train			
15. whistling man			
16. sputtering of motorcycle			
17. waves splashing against wharf			
18. buzzing mosquito			
19. chirping robin			
20. sizzle of tires on pavement			

Name

File.....

Date

*Chart B, for the Selection of Specific Concrete Details
from Chart A*

SUBJECT	MOMENT	IMPRESSION
Mississippi river valley at the Washington Avenue Bridge	At sundown on Septem- ber 28	Natural beauty

SELECTED SPECIFIC CONCRETE DETAILS

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. spreading elm tree | 9. glowing red sky |
| 2. huge gray skyscrapers | 10. wavy blue water |
| 3. huge gray glacial rocks | 11. spectral oil patches |
| 4. steep rock cliffs | 12. red-topped clouds |
| 5. rising full moon | 13. twinkling Jupiter |
| 6. tree-covered banks | 14. pale blue smoke |
| 7. floating coal barges | 15. white foam on water |
| 8. swaying forms of bridge in
the water | 16. green campus |
| | 17. rustling leaves |

(Write the resultant descriptive paragraph in the space below.)

This young writer has tried to describe perhaps too broad a scene for his first attempt, but by and large he has been successful. If we note what he has not done, we can see more clearly the actual *selection* he made of his details.

The details are obviously those in the environs of the river; hence they definitely contribute to the Subject.

The selection of details in terms of this control is usually the least difficult of all, because the actual recording of the details at the scene prevents any other possibility.

Much the same is true of the selection of details in terms of the Moment, for the characteristics of the details are determined by their state at the moment of observation. Suppose the Moment were not at sundown but were during the night sometime; then some of the details actually could not be perceived or would change their characteristics. For example, the grass would no longer appear green; the clouds would no longer be "red topped." These considerations indicate, therefore, that we should very carefully write down only what we actually see and hear. If we record merely "clouds," "buildings," or "huge rocks" we run the risk of having details that are timeless. Because we sometimes write down what we think the characteristics are we make such errors as saying "*gray* shadows on the snow" when there is brilliant sunshine. Actually, artists paint them as they are, namely, *blue*. At night the shadows would be otherwise.

As has been pointed out before, the Impression is the most difficult to treat well. The source of the difficulty may be traced pretty directly to the extent of the scene being described: The broader the scene, the broader the Impression. Less trouble arises when the scene is limited in both time and extent. If we contrast the details of the Chart B of our illustration with the details in the following paragraph we will realize the truth of this. If you prefer to make a direct comparison between

the two paragraphs, turn to page 41 where the description that resulted from the Chart B is reproduced.

Sometimes details appear to be useless because a simple and legitimate alchemy is not understood. Suppose that a detail had been recorded as "loud train whistle" and the Impression in Chart B "cold desolation." Change the detail to "long, drawn-out wail of an approaching train," and behold! it contributes to the Impression. If on the contrary the Impression read "cheerfulness," the detail could be manipulated to "the staccato barks of an approaching train." Or, for *barks*, some other word. The title (not to be confused with Subject) of the paragraph gives the Impression.

Action

Pete glanced at his watch and shouted, "Three minutes to the half, fellows. John, you jerk the wieners apart. Jim, you slice the buns. The rest will wait on the customers." Immediately Pete tore open several boxes of candy. He cut the cellophane from a carton of cigarettes. He emptied a bag of change on the table and made small stacks of nickels, dimes, and quarters. The stadium rumbled as the surging crowd rushed down the ramp and elbowed their way to the front of the stand. "Hey, you! one with, and make it snappy," shouted a fat, young man as he waved a dollar bill over his head. "Okay, guy, I'll be right with you," shouted John as he smeared mustard on a half-cooked wiener.

For "action" we might substitute "briskness" or "haste," but we must agree that each detail contributes directly to the Impression. "Action" is far less broad

an Impression than "natural beauty" and is, therefore, easier to depict.

Printing the Picture

The preliminary work that we have been doing has been necessary. Remember, we are learning to choose some words and reject others. That is the main purpose before us. If you can follow the simple rules that have been given and those that you are about to study, you will find that your conscious effort is rewarded.

To the details you have collected must be added the usual connectives and some concrete verbs to put the paragraph together. When finished, the paragraph will be only about one hundred words long, that is, about twice as long as the paragraph immediately preceding this one.

The directions given below may seem at first glance to be complicated. They really are not—in fact, you will find that you have a list of standards by which you can judge your writing. Beside the directions, at the left, appear some abbreviations which your teacher will use for making marginal comments on your paper. Do not be discouraged if every line of your paper has one or more symbols beside it. Who learns something extremely well at the first attempt? The next time you write a paragraph, you will be pleased to see only one or two corrections suggested. If you follow the directions *exactly*, you will have, of course, a good paragraph at your first attempt.

Please remember the Request preceding Chart A!

These procedures may at first give your writing an unnatural quality, but that will be ironed out later. Let me repeat: These procedures are a means to an end, not the end itself.

Directions for Writing Impersonal Word Pictures

CORRECTION
SYMBOL

EXPLANATION

D.P. Use a *descriptive predicate* (verb). Use only those verbs that appeal to the senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. For example, instead of a general verb of motion like "went," "rose," "left," "departed," "rode," or "walked," use concrete verbs like "circled," "surged," "crept," "danced," "whirled," "swept," "leaped," "sped," "spun," "writhed," "sidled," "meandered," "swayed," "climbed," "skidded," and "slipped."

Choose a verb in keeping with the meaning of the sentence. Water, children, and fire may all *creep*, but only water can *splash*, children *skid*, or fire *flicker*.

Tense Use the *simple past tense*, that is, the form of verbs like those concrete verbs suggested under Descriptive Predicate above, without any auxiliary verbs like "is," "was," "has," "shall," "should," or "has been." Do not write "was going to slip," "will be slipping."

Expl. Do not *explain*. In the sentence "The Mississippi shoved into the dark olive shadows under the bridge on its long journey to the Gulf of Mexico," the underlined portion *explains* or interprets. Such a phrase probably can be corrected only by striking it out.

Further, do not explain where you are or how

you happen to be there. Begin describing at once; a good description needs no label or other interpretive device. Such explanation interrupts movement and breaks the mood.

- S Give the *sensory detail*. Wherever you use a general, summarizing term, or wherever you explain in such a way that by a very slight change you can make the detail a concrete one, "S" will appear in the margin and the faulty detail will be underlined. For example, "She felt angry" might easily be changed to a concrete detail in many ways: "She frowned" (we can see a frown); "She slammed the door and kicked a pillow across the room"; "She flung her coat on the chair and with flashing eyes paced up and down the room." "She sat droopingly" would be corrected by using a descriptive verb, "She drooped."

- Pt. of V. Keep an *impersonal point of view*. Use the third person of personal pronouns, he, she, it, they. The writer is always the observer. In some ways, this overlaps Explanation. Do not write, "It was a gloomy day in late afternoon in November when I paused on the bridge across Plum Creek." The equivalent of what appeared in Chart B under the headings, Subject, Moment, and Impression has been included. Use *only* the concrete details, *never* anything that has been placed elsewhere in Chart B.

These arbitrary rules may appear to be the result of sheer "cussed orneriness" on my part. As a matter of fact, if we could work together, in the ideal teaching-learning situation I suggested above, you would find that you made such changes in your writing when you revised the first general, vague statements into clear,

voice. (W) *use the active not the passive voice*

vigorous English. Perhaps you would not give the same groupings that I have or the same labels, but I am confident that you would arrive at much the same conclusions.

Perhaps you would first put *descriptive predicate* and *simple past tense* under one heading. No matter, as long as you comprehended the reason for considering these matters at all. For the sake of simplicity let us take them one at a time.

You are asked to use verbs that appeal to the senses because they carry more of a punch than the weaker, more general verbs. *Went, left, departed* carry similar general ideas, but if we want to give a notion of the manner of motion, we would have to add to what we have said. Using such verbs as *staggered, leaped, crawled, and sidled* is far more economical for our expressed purpose as well as more informing.

You are asked by implication to avoid *was leaving, was crawling, seemed to sidle*, because the simple past tense is more convincing, because such progressive forms and participles themselves are generally very ineffective, and because you will want to avoid the use of the present tense that is at times ludicrous: "He says to me . . . and I says to him says I . . . and he ups and slams the door and I slams it again right after him . . ." The present tense and the present progressive tense have their limitations.

An exaggerated instance may show how *explanation* halts movement: "I heard a shot . . . let's see . . . was it Thursday or Friday . . . Friday! Because I

was out of baking powder, and Mrs. Hewitt didn't have any to lend me and so I had to go traipsing to the store . . . where was I? Oh, yes! As I was saying, I heard the shot . . ."

In a lesser instance, explanation halts movement by bringing in irrelevant ideas. In the example given under Directions, *on its long journey to the Gulf of Mexico* calls up associations that confuse the impression the writer wanted the reader to have. And words have a way of suggesting many images. If you were to pronounce to a group of people a word like *library* you would find that all of them had different images in their minds. Even if they thought of the same building they probably would find that one saw it in his mind's eye from the outside, another saw it from the inside. The writer must control the images that his readers have; otherwise the direct progress of the movement is thwarted and the readers wander from the scene at hand.

You are directed to keep the impersonal or objective point of view because when we bring ourselves into the picture we are likely to become tangled and confused and irrelevant. This impersonal point of view, also, is of great value to us in judging books, automobiles, courses, and people, for judgments usually consist of comparisons of objects or ideas with a set of standards, not according to likes or dislikes. Further—and here the opposite point of view becomes interpretative and explanatory—to write "It was a gloomy day" without giving details to show the degree of gloominess robs the description of its effectiveness by telling the reader what

he must feel instead of making him have that impression as a result of the skilfully chosen details. Note the difference, for example, between the effect on your feelings of "It was a gloomy day," and these sentences in a letter I recently received from a friend. She wrote, "This is decidedly not a letter-writing afternoon. The wind is rummaging around the corners outside the house, tossing leaves that hit the windows like clumsy bats."

The limitation of the time *within* the description permits you to write rich description and not thin narrative.

By deliberately and consciously selecting and rejecting these various types of words and phrases you are learning to identify them. Later on we shall see how important general and explanatory expressions are in writing stories and extended discussions. It is not, you see, that these are to be avoided always, but rather that they are to be used wisely when we do have recourse to them in other situations.

Samples of Students' Efforts

First, let us see what paragraph resulted from the Chart B of our illustration.

Early Evening at the Washington Avenue Bridge

On the choppy blue waters of the Mississippi, which reflected the swaying forms of the massive bridge and its green tree-covered banks, white patches of foam and spectral oil patterns left by a passing coal barge bobbed up and down. To the left, a steep rock cliff rose from the river, and after it leveled off, several massive, gray glacial rocks spotted the

stretches of green grass. Near the edge of the precipice stood a large green spreading elm under which rustled many brown leaves, gleaming in the light of the pale, full moon rising above in the east. High in the southern sky twinkled orange Jupiter, and silhouetted against the still glowing red western sky, where floated an occasional red-topped cloud, towered many huge skyscrapers. Over the entire valley hung a pale blue fog.

The paragraph is relatively successful, considering the large landscape that the student described. Almost any single part of the whole scene could have furnished enough details for further descriptive paragraphs. In fact in the next sequence of examples we shall see how one student expanded one detail of one description into a whole paragraph.

The three paragraphs of description that we are about to consider were written by the same student and will reveal some further aspects of our present task. The first paragraph is reproduced as it was first written and then as later revised after criticism.

At the height of the storm there was a blurred vision of the sea, but as the surging waves pounded onto the shore ear-splitting sounds of thunder occasionally made the earth tremble. Far away from the shore could be heard the distant moaning of ships. Throughout the storm, rain was falling in torrents and often low scudding black clouds could be seen floating over the raging sea. Wind-bent trees caused by the howling wind and the pounding surf all added to this picture of confusion.

The student who wrote that was of high intelligence, and he felt that he had written "good description." His

paragraph and his feeling were typical—actually—of the paragraphs and feelings of most of the students in the class. He was—they were—quite right! As description goes, this paragraph is not really bad description. (True, the last sentence is somewhat mixed up, but a little change would correct that.)

Then, as Stevenson said about idleness, "And what, in God's name, is all this pother about?" Simply this: We are not, strange as it may seem, trying to write description as such! We are trying to determine some of the parts of language so that we may use them with discrimination. We are trying to weed out of our language much of the vague, though pleasant sounding, stereotyped sort of phrase that causes misunderstandings and fails to please.

The student could answer questions concerning the directions for writing the paragraph, but he failed to demonstrate his knowledge in his writing.

First, you recall, the directions ask that only sensory details be used. To what sense does "At the height of the storm" appeal? Could you touch, see, hear, smell, or taste that? Consider from the same point of view the explanatory quality of "there was a blurred vision of the sea." His detail "ear-splitting sounds of thunder" is likewise explanatory, for a crash of thunder is generally admitted to be "ear-splitting" figuratively.

The directions ask, further, that the verbs be concrete verbs. The list of his verbs reveals only one such verb, "pounded." What are the others but just the sort he was asked to avoid: "was," "made," "could be heard,"

"could be seen," and "added"—all of them general and two of them not in the simple past tense. The instructor's directions consisted mostly of directions for using descriptive predicates, i.e., for using verbs that did most of the work of the adjectives and adverbs. The detail "moaning of ships" is good because it leaps over the more obvious "deep whistles of ships," but the inversion of the phrase gives a descriptive predicate: "ships moaned."

Here is his revised paragraph.

Large gray sheets of rain swept to the earth as the surging, heaving swell of waves pounded onto the shore. In the distance thunder rumbled and the earth trembled. Far away from the shore ships moaned. Low black clouds scudded over the sea. The wind howled, and wind-bent trees creaked as the surf beat against the rocks.

The detail "blurred vision of the sea" has now been made a sensory detail; the rest of the directions have been completely followed. But it is not, we think, as good description as the first. As a whole, perhaps not; rather, the paragraph is made up of strong parts without much to hold it together. We must, however, take up one thing at a time and understand thoroughly each step. At the end of this chapter you will find suggestions for fitting each part into the whole scheme to make a smoother, more effective paragraph. We cannot, however, fit weak parts together; we must have good details to begin with.

The student's next paragraph achieved at once the qualities of the revised version of his first. It is still

somewhat choppy, even considering the confusion of the scene he describes.

A Subway at Rush Hour

The subway rumbled. Brakes squeaked. Crowds jammed into the cars, some with hollow-cheeked faces; others white and pale. Stocky men in greasy overalls and blue work-shirts pushed through the doors. People swayed. A baby cried. Through the crowd a gray-haired man fumbled with a white stick, tapping the pavement before him. A fat woman elbowed everyone in her path. "Archie Lang Found Strangled in Field," screamed the tabloids. Mouths drooped. Feet shuffled. A small, dirty-faced boy laughed at a "Popeye" cartoon. A gaudy, red and black advertisement for Rem Cough Syrup flashed from a carcard. A middle-aged man wearing a derby and tan spats rustled a "Stock Brokers Journal." People clung to straps overhead. Lights in the car flickered, the cars jerked, and the subway rumbled on.

For his third exercise, the student chose to elaborate one detail from the above paragraph. In addition, having studied the suggestions for polishing his paragraph in the remaining pages of this chapter, he managed to insert a narrative thread to join the details. The detail which he expanded is, of course, "Through the crowd a gray-haired man fumbled with a white stick, tapping the pavement before him."

A Blind Man

The gray-haired man fumbled with a white stick, tapping the pavement before him, as he was pushed into the crowded subway. As he groped his way into the car a smiling woman grabbed his arm and led him to a seat. "I want to get off at 48th Street," said the old man to the woman. "Never you

mind; I will help you off," she said. "Thank you kindly," he said. More people jammed the car. "Why don't you give your seat to this lady?" shouted a fat woman seated next to him. He merely shook his head and sighed. The car lurched, and the subway rumbled on.

Finishing Touches

When the photographer examines his printed picture toward the end of the process in the darkroom, he frequently notices some shadows that are too sharp, some streaks, and white bubble marks. He reprints the picture, carefully manipulating the contrasts and finally resorting to a lead pencil for touching up the little white spots.

Your final "print" of your picture probably shows similar flaws: (1) it sounds choppy as you read it aloud and (2) it is so heavily laden with concrete details as to be "sirupy."

Let us for the time being dismiss any concern about the richness of detail, for the procedures are calculated to do that. Later as you write longer papers and have a growing confidence in using words you will dilute the detail to a more palatable proportion.

The choppiness can be attacked directly. It usually results from two things: (1) an inconsistency of the rhythms of the sentences in relation to the scene described, and (2) little dependence of one detail upon another.

In general, short sentences tend to give a breathlessness to an exciting scene, where the action is swift; and

long sentences tend to give a sense of leisureliness when the scene is calm and quiet. The first two descriptions immediately above illustrate the effort of long sentences for quiet scenes; the third paragraph, short sentences for scenes of action. Compare the effect of the two passages below.

A woman screamed through the smoke. A figure appeared at a window. The crowd groaned . . .

The bow of the ship, outlined by the moonlight, slowly rose and fell on the long, sweeping rollers of the Mediterranean.

The position in the sentence of "outlined by the moonlight" contributes much to slowing the sentence down, for interruptions of the normal sentence order usually produce pauses. The comma after *long* also retards the motion. Occasionally we actually insert commas for just that purpose, though the structure of the sentence requires no punctuation. Such commas have been appropriately named "retarding commas."

In the following descriptive passage, you will notice that the rhythms are somewhat subtler than those achieved merely by variation of sentence length. As your ear becomes attuned to the sounds of words, you will consider the musical effect of written work. Notice the effect of *deliciously*. Though it is an explanatory word, the context gives it a tactile as well as onomatopoeic effect.

He pulled off his clothes and with a great shout plunged into the huge breakers curling above him. The shock at first

stunned him, but the warm, frothy water sliding deliciously down his back, under his arms, through his legs, and sloshing around his feet smothered all but a sense of *being*. He held his breath, and let the waves pound him on the gravel of the margin, until he was bruised and torn by the stones. Bleeding, breathless but exultant, he dragged himself to the beach where he could lie exhausted, face upon folded arms, on the hot, yielding sands.

A note of warning concerning rhythms must be sounded. The rhythms of poetry are not to be used in writing prose. Some students, affected by the natural iambic rise and fall of English phrases often manage their sentences so that they have a monotonous *dee-dah, dee-dah, dee-dah* effect: He *felt* that *she* could *draw* him *back* across the *misty years* and *teach* him *all* the *things* that *he* would *like* to *know* about the *tasks* and *joys* of *life*. Prose rhythms are far less evident.

If you will compare the two passages by Charles Dickens, which are quoted below, you will notice that in the first Dickens used slow rhythms in keeping with the quiet mood of the description and in the second used rapid, galloping rhythms in keeping with the vigorous mood of a speeding stagecoach. The retarding effect of the commas in the first is obvious.

Among the narrow thoroughfares at hand, there lingered, here and there, an ancient doorway of carved oak, from which, of old, the sounds of revelry and feasting often came; but now these mansions, only used for storehouses, were dark and dull, and, being filled with wool, and cotton, and the like—such heavy merchandise as stifles sound and stops the throat

of echo—had an air of palpable deadness about them which, added to their silence and desertion, made them very grim.

—*Martin Chuzzlewit*, IX.

The beauty of the night is hardly felt, when Day comes leaping up. Yoho! Two stages, and the country roads are almost changed to a continuous street. Yoho, past market-gardens, rows of houses, villas, crescents, terraces, and squares; past waggons, coaches, carts; past early workmen, late stragglers, drunken men, and sober carriers of loads; past brick and mortar in its every shape; and in among the rattling pavements, where a jaunty-seat upon a coach is not so easy to preserve! Yoho, down countless turnings, and through countless mazy ways, until an old inn-yard is gained, and Tom Pinch, getting down, quite stunned and giddy, is in London.

—*Op. cit.*

Dickens slows up the speed of the second paragraph in the last line by using parenthetical constructions between subject and verb.

The ear, then, may suggest several means for avoiding choppiness of rhythms in descriptive passages. Our second cause of choppiness—the lack of dependence of one detail upon another—can be treated more easily. It is a matter of nailing or dovetailing the parts together.

Cataloging details in a scene often results in a confused image, though the Impression may still be attained.

Trees hid the north and west sides of the farm site. A large white house stood on the south side of the farm place on the road. The barn lay just out of the northern cotton-woods. A silo stood east of the barn. A few chickens foraged around the yard, clucking to themselves. A horse neighed

clearly and loudly in the barn. Weeds grew around the barn. A lumber wagon, a grass mower, and other implements stood around the yard. The sun shone bright.

The student here just put down the details as they occurred to him. Even with the concrete details included, the picture is blurred (try to draw a map of the farm!) because the details do not naturally grow out of each other. If the details are rearranged and if "nails" are driven in, the paragraph will be improved. In the revised paragraph, the "nails" are italicized.

Cottonwoods in the shape of an "L" formed the north and west boundaries of the farm. *In front* of the *northern cottonwoods*, and banked with weeds, stood the large red barn with a tall silo at the east end. *Between the barn* and the large white house, which stood a little back from the road, a lumber wagon, a grass mower, and other implements glittered in the bright sunshine. *Under these things*, a few chickens foraged around the yard, clucking to themselves, and from the red barn a horse neighed clearly and loudly.

The simplest nails are words that are repeated or that refer to words which have appeared earlier in the paragraph. Since, too, the simplest order of presentation is the time order, words like *next*, *then*, *soon*, *after*, serve as excellent nails. Similar to those time words are direction or relation words: *over*, *under*, *between*, *beside*, *in front of*, *around* and *into*.

Sometimes details may be said to *act on* others instead of to *grow out* of them.

He emptied the tool kit onto the ground beside him. Reaching down, he selected a wrench which he fitted to the nut on

the rim of the wheel. As he twisted the wrench, the wheel spun, knocking the wrench from his hand.

A comparison of this paragraph with one without the internailing of details will reveal how important the dependence is.

He emptied the tool kit onto the ground. He selected a wrench for the nut on the rim. As he twisted, the wheel spun, knocking the tool from his hand.

A clue to still another way for keeping well in hand the relations between details lies in a device we often resort to when directing people to buildings which they are seeking. "You'll come to a street intersection like a 'Y'; take the right fork. The bank is just two blocks beyond." Letters or common objects have forms that lend themselves to this: a bay may be shaped like a fish-hook or a horseshoe; the shape of a building may be like a capital "L," "X," "E," "H," "T," or "V." Victor Hugo in his great description of the Battle of Waterloo, in *Les Miserables*, uses a capital "A" to represent the lines of march and attack.

Collecting Your Dividends

The intense efforts necessary for following the procedures of this chapter should already be paying you dividends. You should be finding a considerable satisfaction in imprisoning an abstract impression in a very clear and interesting paragraph, and in making words do what you want them to. In your letters to friends, you are not saying, "I had a grand time last Saturday

night," and letting that be all. You are moved, you find, to write a brief description of some of the incidents, of some of the people, and of some of the places that made up that pleasant time.

Perhaps the best use to which these descriptive paragraphs can be put is that of using them as examples wherever you have made a general statement. "I had a grand time Saturday night" should, as is suggested, be followed by descriptions of various things that went to make up the good time. Such concrete examples add to the clearness of your talk or your paper, as well as to the interest. The good lecturer frequently pauses to say, "For example, an incident that occurred to me not long ago will make clear what I mean." His use is one to be followed in your term papers. Suppose you are trying to make clear how you became first afraid of the dark. Merely explaining that you had an unpleasant experience will not be enough; describe the situation out of which the fear grew.

It is true that people rarely describe at any length merely for the sake of describing. As the book develops, you will see how a combination of the methods of this chapter and of the next lend themselves to the writing of stories and to term papers. Indeed, the scale of words from the general to the specific furnishes a means for organizing a paper containing many paragraphs. In all of these discussions, the aim will continue to be *to help you to apply what you already know, so that you can say what you mean.*

Suggested Assignments for Chapter Two

Teachers and students should make such changes in these suggested assignments as they find necessary. Experience with them has demonstrated that they are just about right from the point of view of sustained interest and understanding. The chapter should be read as a whole rapidly first and then studied more slowly as the assignments progress.

Assignment One. Rearrange the jumbled series of words to make them move from general to specific.

Assignment Two. Make and fill out a Chart A from a paragraph of description from professional writing.

Assignment Three. Draw and fill out a Chart A from the actual observation of a scene, preferably a scene of action.

Assignment Four. Revise carefully the first Chart A from actual observation, and fill out a Chart B from a paragraph of description taken from professional writing. Follow with exercises B, C, and D on pages 27-30.

Assignment Five. Fill out a Chart B from the revised Chart A.

Assignment Six. Revise the Chart B after criticism and write the paragraph of description resulting from it.

Assignment Seven. From memory or actual observation make and fill out a Chart B and write a paragraph of description, using the details from this Chart B.

Assignment Eight. From memory or observation write a paragraph of description, using no charts. Keep, however, to the principles involved.

Assignment Nine. In many instances this assignment may be substituted for Assignment Eight.

Write a paragraph of description that observes the considerations of the linking of details and rhythm.

Additional Specimens of Descriptive Paragraphs

The descriptive paragraphs that follow are included for purposes of criticism and discussion. Some of them frankly serve as models of what not to do.

Example 1

"I'm just beginning to see through this," murmured Ann. Ruth raised her eyes from the book she was reading and glanced at Ann, then slid down in her chair and rocked gently back and forth in front of the gas heater. The light from the heater flushed her face with a faint pink, and touched a stray lock of hair dropped across her forehead. Ann sprawled across the bed with her chin in her cupped left hand. Her eyes stared at the logic book propped against the pillows in front of her. One corner of her mouth drooped, and her knit brows drew a furrow in her forehead.

Example 2

From out of the bright star-lit sky the full moon beamed down upon a small lake, nestled amidst a group of tall shimmering pines. The waves lapped gently against the wide sandy beach, and the leaves in the trees rustled faintly as the soothing strains of "In the Gloaming" floated from across the lake where a small campfire flickered.

Example 3

Brakes squealed and gears ground as the Stop and Go signal clicked. The engines throbbed as the automobiles leaped forward. A dirty white motorcycle darted from behind a rumbling truck and "put-putted" past a rattling Ford.

Example 4

The prisoner tumbled into the pitch-black dungeon. An iron door clanked heavily behind him. Groping in the dark-

ness with his hands thrust out before him, he felt the cold, stone, dungeon walls. Slimy water oozed from the cracks in the huge, rough rocks, and ran down their sides in slow streams. From the floor arose a nauseating smell of decomposing human flesh and rotting wastes. The man grasped his nose, and then staggering a step he fell to the floor and buried his face amidst crawling vermin in the thick layers of dust.

Example 5

Out of the eighth story window of the Allis Hotel gushed a thick, heavy stream of smoke. "Fire! Fire!" screamed the little, crippled man who was sitting against the building selling pencils. And immediately clanging fire-wagons circled the corner and jerked to a sudden stop. The shrill sirens of the speeding ambulances shrieked and bellowed, and cars honked constantly. Bricks crashed to the ground with heavy thuds, and the walls thundered as they crumbled and collapsed. Terrific roars of explosions echoed through the streets. The firemen dodged shattering glass and falling timbers, but still a fireman in a black, shining coat shouted, "Don't give up!" And as they poured more water upon the blazing building, white faced men, women, and children lying on the grass wailed and moaned.

Example 6

Dazzling streaks of light shot through the sky as the sun sank. As the rays struck the edge of the pool, a fiery glow spread over the blue waters and just touched the birches on the further side. High flying hawks glided gracefully through the dusky sky while in the rushes a dull colored mallard dodged through the long, tapering snake grass. Slowly the colors faded, and small shining stars glimmered in the dark blue sky. The day is done.

Example 7

Dark gray clouds hung low over head. An auto horn honked faintly. Coarse gravel crackled under the big black tires of a large white truck as it came to a stop. A medium sized man in gray shirt and trousers, with the neck of a quart milk bottle grasped in his right hand, stepped lightly from the doorless cab of the truck to the curb. A little, gray sparrow twittered from the bare limb of an elm tree beside the curb. The man trotted silently up a short cement sidewalk, set the bottle on one end of a scarred wooden porch step, turned on his heel, padded swiftly back to the curb and leaped to the cab of the truck. The motor groaned and the truck rolled smoothly ahead.

Example 8

The huge red truck roared, but the wheels merely whirled around. The soft, sticky soil clung to the wheels and sucked at the laborer's heavy boots. An old man pushed a heavy plank in front of the enormous wheel. Another man slowly scraped the mud from in front of the other wheel. Still another man buckled chains around both mired wheels. A tractor backed up and hitched on to the front of the truck. Motors roared. The chain jerked taut. Men heaved on the back end of the truck. The wheels grabbed. Slowly, very slowly the truck plowed forward and with one last tug the wheels grabbed the plank and the truck rumbled out.

Example 9

The sun's rays glinted on the dry leaves, and the plants, faded and yellow, drooped to the ground. Yellow and red leaves fluttered before the wind and drifted into the street gutters or piled up against the shrubbery. Smoke curled from a few chimneys and eddied in the wind which rattled the faded awnings and slammed a door. The wind rustled the leaves.

that clung to the branches and flapped the porch curtains. Ducks, in "V" formation, flew south, and the sun's rays glinted on the dry leaves.

Example 10

The gray haired old lady slid into her squeaky old chair and rocked back and forth. As the rays of heat from the fire-place fell upon her face, it flushed a faint pink, and she stretched out her arm and pushed the tiny lever on the radio. After she pulled her scarf more tightly around her, she propped her feet on the foot stool before her and leaned her head back on the chair. Then closing her eyes, she smiled faintly as the strains of "Home Sweet Home" floated through the air.

Example 11

With a disgruntled shout, "Jarv, damn you, quit cheating!" Pete slammed down his cards. Carl and Trip stopped lugging nickels up against the side wall and strode over towards Pete to see what had caused the commotion. Marty muttered to Wally that he thought that "Bud has a good chance for making the mythical 'All American'" as Frank bellowed out, while he wrestled, "Strong, give me that paper with those gals telephone numbers." "Sodie," the tallest boy in the house, wrinkled his forehead, curled his lower lip, and exclaimed in his whisky baritone, "I've got that blonde just where I want her!" "But darling, you know I don't like her," cooed Vinney into the chipped mouthpiece of the phone. "Hobbie, you little runt. I'll bet you two to one that I get more ducks than you do," wagered Linky, the poorest shot in the house. Jimmy played the accompaniment while Frank, John, Bob, and Bill gathered around the piano singing "When did you leave heaven?"

Example 12

Chairs scraped back and forth while a boy rapidly thumbed through a card catalogue and a blond haired girl in a dubonnet knit dress rustled through the pages of a dictionary. The pens scratched as sheet after sheet of notebook paper slipped in and out of the clicking notebook rings. A tall, blond boy dropped a big yellow pencil on the floor with a thud and then with a yank tore a piece of notebook paper out of his notebook. A black haired girl wearing a red and black silk dress wiped her gold oxford glasses and dropped her pens and pencils into her pocketbook and snapped it shut.

Example 13

The gray haired woman at the head of the table struck the small brass bell and beamed at the smiling girls. Immediately the girls unfolded their napkins and chattered loudly. Jean murmured to Edith, "How about telling us about your big date Saturday night?" The glimmering candles cast a soft glow over the shining silver on the white linen tablecloth. Someone hummed, "Happy Birthday to you" and everyone glanced at Jacq. who smiled and blushed. Then white hands raised thin water glasses aloft, and the notes of "Drink her Down," floated through the room. The eyes of the gray haired woman at the head of the table glowed as she looked down the table at the flushed and smiling faces.

Example 14

"Minnesota, Hats Off to Thee" blasted forth from the shining brass instruments. Joe Rinseldi set his lifted chin a bit as he loosened his white collar. His fingers pulled and tugged on the cuffs of his coat and he shrugged his shoulders. "Gee, do they have to play that?" The orchestra blared "Michigan Rouser." Joe glanced at the five comrades. They looked at the floor and shifted their weight from one foot to the other.

"Well c'mon! might as well sit down. The old train leaves in a little over an hour—an' the sooner we get out of here, the better," he whispered. Oh I wouldn't say that," Mel Cramer said as he smiled at the girls, "Minnesota has its good points." Stiffly they filed toward the easy chairs. Mat Patanelli, Jacqie, Diane and Joe seated themselves on one of the davenports. The others grouped about on chairs and foot stools. Silently the girls sneaked side glances at one another.

CHAPTER III

SAYING WHAT YOU MEAN— SECOND PHASE

The importance of pictures for conveying news is demonstrated by the success of magazines that are devoted almost entirely to the reproduction of photographs; but even they are frequently accompanied by descriptive paragraphs. Information can be conveyed rapidly and accurately by pictures, but all too often the reader is left to his own devices for an interpretation or explanation of them. We cannot, everyone will quickly admit, pass on all ideas by pictures or descriptions alone. The limitations of such methods become quickly apparent when we try to explain why we are studying a particular course at school, how one friend influenced us to go on a trip with him, how to study, how to learn how to write, how we happened to choose a hobby or a vocation. Pictures—word or photographic—would not only be incomplete but would be uneconomical of space. To reduce this to absurdity would be to answer the question, "What book do we use in this course?", by showing a picture of it or of describing the cover and the pages. We want specific information like, "Jeans' *Electricity and Magnetism*"; whether the information is concrete and appeals, therefore, to our senses of smell, touch, taste, sight, or hearing, is, here, of lesser importance.

We must refer back to our scale of words from the specific to the concrete. We saw that we could select words that were simply specific or were specific and concrete.

GENERAL	SPECIFIC
Book—text	J. H. Jeans' <i>Electricity and Magnetism</i>

GENERAL	SPECIFIC AND CONCRETE
Motion—gesture	waving his hand

For dealing with information and ideas, we depend most upon words which are essentially specific and this chapter will attempt to show you that the methods for writing explanatory paragraphs differ very little from those for writing descriptive paragraphs. At times, we shall be hard put to it to see any difference at all.

One significant difference between the importance of the descriptive paragraph and the explanatory paragraph is this: A series of ten or more descriptive paragraphs would prove tiresome, for the paragraphs would not easily hang together and develop an idea; whereas a series of explanatory paragraphs that are illustrated by an occasional bit of description would hang together—in fact just such a combination constitutes most of the articles we read in papers or magazines. The essential problems of writing explanatory paragraphs and of writing a long article or term paper are the same. For that reason, we shall anticipate in part the problems of writing the longer paper as we set about facing the problems of the shorter paper, or paragraph.

What ideas we have to express are not so readily gathered, perhaps, as what details we wished to present

in a description. For the word picture, all we had to do was to look at or remember a scene. That was fairly easy. Gathering details for explaining an idea is almost as easy if we jot down our ideas as we did for Chart A. The methods that follow will go on the assumption that we want at first to avoid long trips to the library for reading many books. We have much that we can say without that. We shall have much reading to do later when we have to look up material for a term paper or for our boss on the job. Perhaps a semi-descriptive method by which one instructor showed a class how to gather and sort out material will be of help here.

The instructor wrote "Carelessness causes accidents" on the blackboard and said to the class, "If we were to write a paragraph discussing this, what are some of the ideas we might include in the paragraph?" After the instructor had written the suggestions on the board as students told them to him, here is what appeared.

Carelessness Causes Accidents

1. Not observing Stop signs on through highways
2. Driving rapidly across "blind" intersections
3. Starting from the curb without looking to see what cars approached from the rear
4. Failing to signal turns, especially left turns
5. Driving with faulty brakes
6. Driving with faulty headlights
7. Failing to slow down when approaching a group of children playing by the side of the road
8. Driving too close to children riding bicycles in the street
9. "Jumping" the Go signal
10. Parking too far from the curb

One student with a small bandage above his left eye wigwagged violently. The instructor looked at him. The student grinned. "Leaving Kiddie Kars on dark stair landings." The instructor added that to the list and the class began to offer other suggestions. The three-section blackboard was filled up. Some of the additional suggestions were:

11. Leaving Kiddie Kars on dark landings
12. Letting mops and brooms clutter up cellar stairs and landings
13. Holding a knife incorrectly when whittling a piece of wood
14. Not watching where you step when you go into an elevator or onto a train
15. Mounting an insecure stepladder.

The instructor looked at the blackboard covered with the suggestions (there were about fifty of them) made by the class and said thoughtfully, "If we describe even briefly each instance, how can we get them all in one paragraph? A paragraph, even a long one, seldom has more than three hundred words. Perhaps we are trying to cover too much ground for one paragraph." He turned to the board and drew a line through "Carelessness causes accidents" and wrote beneath it "Carelessness in *auto driving* causes accidents." Then he crossed out on the list of suggestions all items like those numbered 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 in the list reproduced here. The class then suggested that the sentence might even be changed so that it was concerned only with carelessness in driving a car through only the resi-

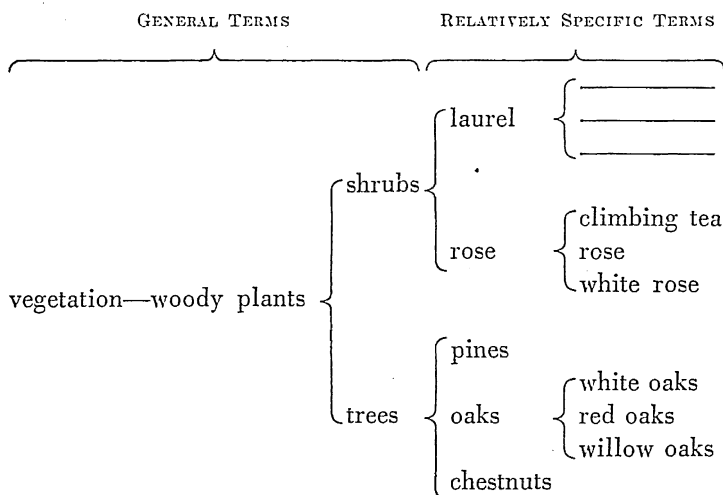
dential district of a city, for there were still many illustrations left on the board that had to do with auto driving in general.

One student then asked, "Couldn't we use the material we have rejected in another paragraph or perhaps in several paragraphs?" Of course! In fact a very long paper—even a very long book—could be written on the subject of . . . "Well, what," asked the instructor, "would be the subject?" Someone said "Carelessness." "Causes accidents?" "No, not only that. A chapter might be used to discuss the question of why people are careless and what might be done to make them more careful. Another might give a lot of statistics of various kinds of accidents caused by carelessness. Why, another might even tell what great discoveries were made because a scientist *was* careless . . . !"

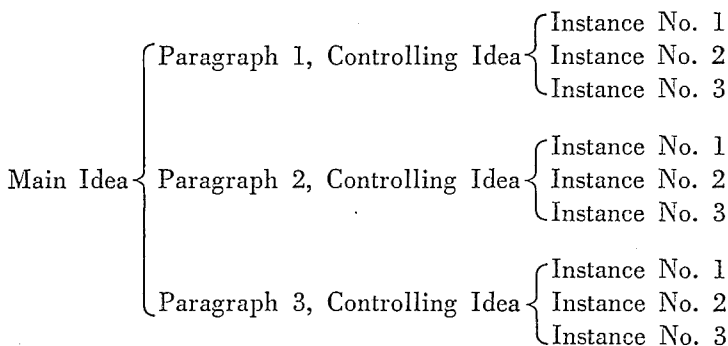
We ought to look at several interesting problems that have grown out of this class discussion. Though the emphasis was upon using specific instances of an idea (except when it was suggested that the "why" of accidents or of carelessness be discussed), we should understand what has happened, before we go on.

The first and most obvious fact to be learned from the class discussion is that we can simplify our writing and make it easier to write as well as easier to read and understand by choosing an idea that is not too broad. To test an idea for its suitability for the length of the paper we wish to write, we can readily use the same method, that of writing down all of the things that

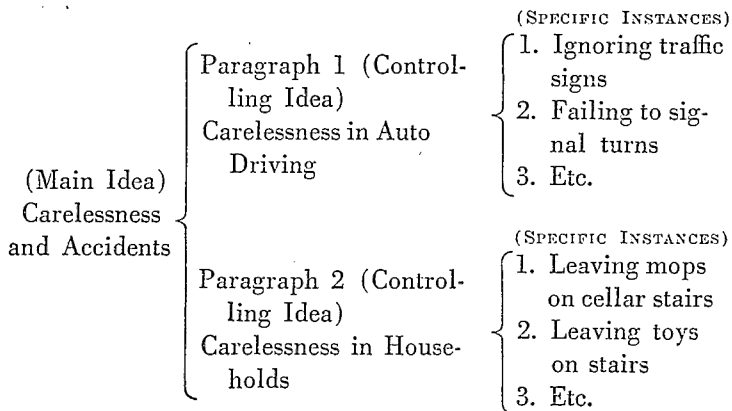
occur to us concerning the idea and then sorting them out according to the various divisions we have made of our *main idea*. The principle used to determine the *controlling ideas* for the separate paragraphs is not unlike the principle by which we sorted words to determine whether they were relatively *general* or *specific*. Our *main idea* should include all of the *paragraph controlling ideas*. If we amplify the series suggested in Chapter II, i.e., vegetation, woody plants, trees, oak trees, white oaks, so that each word, as its meaning becomes more general, will include more than was originally stated in the series, the principle as applied to our problem will appear. Our amplification will not be complete, of course, and botanists are asked to be indulgent of our use of terms.



In a like manner, we can indicate the relations between the *main idea*, the *paragraph controlling ideas*, and the *specific instances*.



There may be more than three paragraphs and more than three instances in each paragraph, or fewer, but the principle is the same. Using the results of the class discussion, we can express the relations in this form.



These graphic examples are only suggestive. They may be expanded or contracted. The important thing to notice is that as you pass from main headings to sub-headings, the terms change from those that are general to relatively less general or more specific.

Some students find that blocking out each paragraph of a paper, as they did for the paragraph of description, is of great help to them in keeping irrelevant material out of their paragraphs and in seeing readily just what they will have in the paper as a whole. Instead of making the usual formal outline, they adapt Chart B to the new purpose, and call the new chart Chart C. The general series of statements for a paper on refrigerators might be like the following:

Refrigerators

Main Statement: Electric refrigerators are better than ice boxes

Paragraph 1. Controlling Idea: Electric refrigerators are more convenient than ice boxes

Paragraph 2. Controlling Idea: Electric refrigerators are more economical than ice boxes

Paragraph 3. Controlling Idea: Electric refrigerators are more efficient than ice boxes

Paragraph 4. Controlling Idea: Electric refrigerators are cleaner than ice boxes

The Chart C for the first paragraph might appear like the following. (Notice that the headings "Moment" and "Impression" of Chart B have been replaced by one, "Controlling Idea"; time is not important here.)

Chart C, A Chart for Selecting the Details for Single Explanatory Paragraphs

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
Electric refrigerators	Convenience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No ice to carry 2. No overflow pan to watch 3. Furnishes ice cubes 4. Can be started, stopped and regulated for temperature at will 5. No dirt from sawdust 6. Cheaper to buy electricity than ice

Do details 5 and 6 contribute to the Controlling Idea? Five suggests cleanliness and six economy. They obviously should not be in this chart but in others.

As in writing the descriptive paragraphs from charts, you will have to use verbs, adjectives, and connectives to give meaning to the details. How one student followed this method is reproduced here. Notice that the examples include many of the tenses and moods of verbs that you were directed to omit in composing images.

The Cultivation of Cave Mushrooms

(Chart C for Paragraph 6)

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
Temperature	Control	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cold retards growth of spawn2. High temperatures increase the number of bacteria, mold, and insect growths3. Heat makes mushrooms frail and distorted4. Outside air must be excluded from cave

*Paragraph 6 of Paper on
The Cultivation of Cave Mushrooms*

Mushrooms will grow within the limits prescribed. Throughout the growing season, the temperature should be uniform. A cold temperature will retard the growth of the spawn, thus prolonging the period between crops. If the temperature is too high, bacteria, mold and insect growths will soon destroy the materials involved, such as spawn, manure, and even the growing crop. Heat increases the growth of mushrooms too rapidly and makes them frail and distorted. In caves, however, a uniform temperature may be maintained, provided that all air spaces permitting outside influences to enter are well closed.

The following example was written on a more homely subject than that above. Again each detail contributes directly to the subject and to the controlling idea.

Chart C

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
Electric roasters	Convenience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Light to handle 2. Temperature is easily regulated 3. Easy to turn on or off 4. No danger of burning food 5. Can be used to cook rolls, vegetables, pies, and cakes 6. A whole meal can be cooked in one container at one time 7. Can be used in a small space

Use of an Electric Roaster

Electric roasters are much more convenient than the average person realizes. In the first place, the electric roaster is easy to handle. It can be moved about easily, for the outside of the roaster does not absorb the heat that is turned on in the inside of the roaster. Secondly there is no danger of burning the food as the temperature can be regulated to high, medium, or low. The cook can put the roast into the roaster, turn on the current, and forget about it until the time of serving. Other foods besides meats can be cooked in this modern electric roaster; vegetables can be cooked, pies and biscuits baked and even a cake can be made. In fact, a whole meal of vegetables, potatoes and meat can be cooked at one time. This modern electric roaster takes up a very small place so it can be used in a small apartment.

The student had some feeling for connecting the details, so he began his fourth sentence with "secondly." As will be suggested under "Polishing the Paragraph" this sort of *nail* is useful but must be used carefully. The details that follow this one should also be numbered, if they follow in such an order. Here, however, some other device should be used for linking the details.

A less successful attempt furnishes our next illustration. If you turn back to the Scale of Words from General to Specific you will see at once that the details included in the chart are relatively more general than specific. For example, the second detail in the chart, *classical music by a guest opera star*, could be made specific by naming both the piece of music and the singer. The writer seemed to be trying to use two controlling ideas, *a typical program on the radio* and *variety*. This confusion is not evident in his chart, but it is at once apparent from the first two sentences of the paragraph he wrote. The very general quality of the whole paragraph suggests that had he developed his idea into an extended discussion he might have used this paragraph at, or near, the opening.

An Example of Chart C

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
"Bing" Crosby's Kraft Music Hall	Variety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Bob" Burns' top-notch comedy 2. Classical music by a guest opera star 3. Popular music by orchestra 4. "Bing" Crosby's singing 5. Music, humor, or dramatic sketch is supplied by guest artist

"Bing" Crosby's Kraft Music Hall is the typical American radio program. Variety is its chief characteristic. "Bing's" superb singing of popular music is contrasted with a bit of opera. "Bob" Burns' comedy is then topped off by a touch of drama. As a whole this program's variety makes it the best of the week.

From the point of view of specificity of details and their relevancy to the controlling idea, the following example is a bit more successful than the preceding. The rhythm of the sentences is, however, extremely uneven, and the linking of details (as we must expect in these first attempts) is very loose.

An Example of Chart C

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
Prevention of accidents in travel by airplane	Governmental regulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilots and planes licensed by government 2. Mechanisms of planes inspected by government engineers 3. Traffic rules established by government 4. "Barnstorming" prohibited by state governments 5. Air schools licensed and inspected by government 6. Municipal airfields regulated by government 7. Radio beacons set up by government 8. Air routes laid out by government 9. Emergency landing fields provided by government

Governmental Regulation of Travel by Airplane

Air travel has been regulated by the government for a number of years. When planes were first used for government service, they were inspected and checked to insure service. The pilots of all commercial planes were licensed under government regulations. The government set up certain "altitude distance flying miles." Radio broadcasts of the weather from all parts of the country were sent at brief intervals over the air waves to pilots in planes. Along the air routes the government set up emergency landing fields and radio beacons.

Good municipal airports have been designed by the government to prevent accidents on take-offs. Air schools have been established under government regulation to teach men and women to be more skillful pilots. "Barnstorming" is prohibited in many of the states.

The illustrations that follow show first attempts at writing a whole paper from a series of charts. The revisions in the chart are indicated by italics.

Chart C for Paragraph 1

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
Motion pictures	Educational value to masses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travelogues, some in color, give the masses a chance to visit far-off places by the camera route 2. Historical films acquaint people more thoroughly with events and periods of historical import 3. <i>Founded on great novels and biographies, some movies give people the opportunity to know the stories in pictorial form</i> 4. <i>Movies furnish a veritable library in pictures of many subjects, current affairs, science, crime detection, etc.</i> 5. <i>Stage shows made into movies bring the stage to small towns</i>

As you will quickly see, the paragraph that was first written from the chart was quite loosely put together. The first draft is followed immediately by the revised form.

Education from Motion Pictures

(First draft)

Educationally the motion pictures have no equal. Statistics show that the motion pictures depend on the masses for survival. This class of people are the limited income group, hence they have little time and less money to spend on culture and education. Travelogues, some in gorgeous colors, give the poorer people a chance to visit far-off places via the camera route. Historical plays with accurately designed costumes acquaint people with events and periods of past importance. Great plays, novels, and stage shows of merit, which have been adapted to the screen, bring these cultural highlights to your neighborhood. The variety of cinema short subjects gives the high points of current affairs, science, crime detection, invention, sports, and fashions, and they keep people almost unconsciously but interestedly in touch with the trends of the world.

The irrelevancies and the confusions of the first draft are somewhat removed from the revised paragraph.

Education from Motion Pictures

(Revised)

The variety of screen subjects keeps the masses in touch with current affairs, science, crime detection, sports, travel, and agriculture, and therefore forms a veritable library in pictures. Travel pictures, some in color, give the masses a chance to visit far-off places via the camera route. Through the camera, too, historical plays with accurately designed costumes acquaint people with customs and periods of past im-

portance. Some movie scenarios are based upon great novels and books, so people too poor to buy books have at least a chance to know their contents from pictures. Likewise, the stage is brought to any small town instead of only to centers of drama by the adaptation of stage shows to motion pictures.

In the revisions, the student has adhered more closely to his outline and has observed a little more the natural sequence of his ideas. The paragraph does exhibit considerable looseness of structure, for the sentences do not grow clearly out of those that precede, but that paragraph, and those which follow, is given to emphasize the fact that close adherence to the details of Chart C will insure your having something to say about one subject or idea. The actual barebones of the skeleton of a paper become almost at once apparent from this paper on the motion pictures. To put it another way, the essentially good structure of a paper is seen to be the result of *pre*vision by determining the plan in advance by the use of some device like that of Chart C. Good sentences (and they include devices for connecting sentences) are the result of careful *re*vision. The student for whom organization is one of the greatest obstacles can turn out a surprisingly sound paper by doing little more than reproducing in paragraph form the sentences that furnish the details of his Chart C.

Without further comment, then, the charts for paragraphs 2, 3, 4, and 5, followed by the paragraphs derived from them, will be given you. These, with the one discussed above, comprise the student's paper on The Value of the Motion Pictures to the General Public.

Chart C for Paragraph 2

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
The value of motion pictures to the general public is widespread	The pleasures and amusements in motion pictures for the masses are unlimited	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The screen adoption of fine plays and notable novels brings pleasure to all2. The very best comedy talent gives the public great amusement3. The dreams of far-off places are brought to realization in the colorful filming of travelogues4. The fantasy of the cinema gives the people a mental lift and stimulation5. Musical productions allow the profession's finest to bring a splendid pictorial as well as musical show to everyone.

G WHAT YOU MEAN

Chart C for Paragraph 3

CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
The education in motion pictures is far-reaching and general	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The newsreel performs almost the same function as a newspaper in unabridged fashion with its current affairs, fashions, sports, inventions and scientific reels.2. Historical and costume films acquaint people who may never read a book with history3. Great plays with a screen adaptation broaden the movie-goer's culture4. Important and prize-winning novels portrayed on the screen color the public's background

Chart C for Paragraph 4

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
The value of motion pictures to the general public is widespread	The motion picture is indispensable as a propaganda machine	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The movie shorts of the Crime Doesn't Pay type influence the youth to seek a more honest and sure vocation2. The flood of shorts over the country on safe-driving campaigns has a great influence on the motoring public3. The travel shorts influence a great many to travel4. Through the cinema the government projects patriotism to its people

Chart C for Paragraph 5

SUBJECT	CONTROLLING IDEA	SPECIFIC DETAILS
The value of motion pictures to the general public is widespread	The motion pictures are necessary to the welfare of our people	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The movie house ranks along with the school, the church, and the home as a center of activity2. The theatre's program is censored to insure clean entertainment3. Relief organizations allow for a requisition to be used in local theatres4. Most state governments have kept the low-priced theatre tax free to encourage the masses to make their local movie their place of entertainment.5. They realize the importance of clean diversion for the limited social group

The Value of Motion Pictures to the General Public

The pleasures and amusements in motion pictures are unlimited for the masses. Screen adaptations of fine plays and notable novels bring pleasure to all. Everyone derives great amusement from the very best of comedy talent afforded by the movies. Show places, exhibitions, colorful travelogues bring a realization in some part of the dreams of far off places. The beauty of musical productions is that they allow the profession's finest to bring a splendid pictorial as well as musical show to everyone. One of the most important phases of the movie is that its sheer fantasy gives the tired, limited-income group a mental lift or stimulation.

Education in motion pictures is far reaching and general. In looking back over a complete screen performance you find that the news reel performs almost the same function as a newspaper but in an abridged fashion. A commentator's information on current affairs gives you the high lights of the week's news on national or international fronts. A special fashion artist will display before you the latest in clothing design which will make the ladies sit forward with interest. The sport news always captures the entire audience because of the thrilling scenes of conflict which are often in slow motion to show how an elusive back slipped from an opponent's grasp or how a double play was executed in a series game. Now scientific news is of such "spot value" that you have whole screen shorts on science and invention, which gives the public the highlights of technical and scientific discoveries. One of the most important departments of the movie industry is the research division which compiles authentic dress, dialogue, customs, scenes, and manners, often spending months in the preparation of these facts to acquaint people with previous times and history. Great plays of Shakespeare, O'Neill, Shaw and others broaden the culture of the socially limited group and with important and prize winning novels

adapted to the screen the public's background is still further colored.

To most, the word propaganda has an undesirable sound because the majority of people associate propaganda with that used by less republican nations than our own, but propaganda has a good use also, which the screen employs. The movie shorts of the "Crime doesn't pay" series are propaganda, attempting to influence the youth of the nation to seek a more honest and sure vocation. Recently in conjunction with safe driving campaigns throughout the country your neighborhood theatre showed movie shorts on intelligent driving methods. Propaganda of the good type is employed by such worthy institutions as the Community Fund and the National Tubercular Association via your neighborhood screen. It is by this same method that the government projects patriotism to its people, especially in times of national stress.

Your neighborhood movie house ranks with the school, the church, and the home as a center of activity in a locality. Because of this importance relief organizations allow for a requisition to be used by their clients in a local theatre. Most state governments, including our own, have kept the low priced suburban theatre tax free to encourage the masses to make their movie their place of entertainment. With all studio celluloid censored by a Washington bureau to safeguard the entertainment the state governments have realized the importance of clean diversion for the limited social group who have a nominal sum to spend for fun. Too, with the welfare of our people still of prime importance to our leaders the motion picture has proved itself unparalleled in that respect.

Suggested Topics for Paragraph Development

1. The leaves of the trees are green.
2. Long trips are more comfortably made by train than by bus.

3. The mechanical parts of a bound book are few.
4. Haste makes waste.
5. A stitch in time saves nine.
6. Each person has a set of characteristic gestures.
7. "The paragraph contains only as much as the reader can grasp in one *mind-ful*."
8. Storms thrill me.
9. Movies are frequently based upon a well-known novel or play.
10. Radio programs furnish many kinds of entertainment.

Suggested Problem

Make and fill out a Chart C for each paragraph in the following paper.

Do You Realize—?

If we should stop to think how much it would cost us to go to a theatre to see a musical comedy, we might appreciate our radio a little more. Today's radio program provides many kinds of entertainment. We have but to click on the radio to hear music, comedy, or drama. Nor does the program have to be in our own city, state or even country. Even a small child has no trouble in picking up a broadcast from England because our modern radios are made of the very simplest mechanics.

Music of all types can be found within twenty-four hours. The Metropolitan Opera Company broadcasts complete operas. The popular Hit Parade plays the week's hit tunes. The Ford Evening Hour is becoming more popular each week among symphony lovers. For swing music the "jam session" exponents turn to Bennie Goodman's hour, the only completely swing program. Such well known leaders as Wayne King, Ray Noble, Paul Whiteman, Glen Gray, Ben Bernie, and Al

Goodman mix into their programs a dash of swing, a dash of waltz, and a dash of lullaby.

If music of any type does not please you, you will not have much trouble in finding an excellent bit of drama. Radio Theatre is probably *the* drama program, for it does not limit itself to broadcasting motion pictures. The Radio Theatre has produced some very good plays lately, among which "Brewster's Millions" is outstanding. On the other hand Hollywood Hotel restricts itself to the dramatization of scenes from motion pictures, and Louella Parsons does a fine job in introducing Hollywood's most popular stars. For a "Crime Doesn't Pay" dramatization we tune our dials to Gang-busters. A very good broadcast of great men of history is found in Calvacade of America. Also there are innumerable continued stories such as Today's Children, One Man's Family, Easy Aces, Myrt and Marge, Lights Out, and Big City.

Comedy, you say? Eddie Cantor's program is the "tops." He's the one who really has the comedy. There is no one on the air who can be compared with Eddie. He's known to all as the good natured banjo-eyed comedian of both air and screen fame. But still we must not forget our "pooden" headed Charlie McCarthy. A ventriloquist of rare fame, Edgar Bergen, has made Charlie dear to the hearts of many feminine admirers and a splinter in the neck of many males who have attempted to match wits with Charlie. For many years Burns and Allen have had patient listeners who will probably continue listening to America's comedian man and wife. We find a mixture of music and comedy in Al Jolson's, Jack Benny's, and Jack Oakie's programs.

To be sure we are not forgetting the news commentators who are not only a source of vital information but also of great interest to America's news loving public. Boake Carter, Lowell Thomas, and Alexander Woolcott are the most popular commentators. March of Time is the best program that dramatizes news events.

Still we have many minor interests presented on the radio. Stock market reports, sports explained play by play, styles for men and women, Hollywood and New York gossip columns, and many political speeches all go to making up every day's program.

Again I remind you that if we realized the cost of such entertainment, we might appreciate our radios just a little bit more. Many of us do not realize we have such a wide scope of entertainment on our radio—so here's to greater realization.

Further Modifications of These Methods of Planning Papers

Two methods, each the reverse of the other, have been suggested: (1) write down all the ideas that come to you concerning your subject and then group the ideas, or (2) select your topic and state the main idea generally, and then with successively more specific statements indicate the subdivisions under the main topic. In Chapter VI, Combining Methods, specific examples will be given to show how a whole paper is organized. Let it suffice here that the material of a paper can be controlled easily and well by writing a statement that sums up the ideas of the paper. In this summarizing statement, each section (not necessarily each paragraph) may be represented by a word or phrase. If, for instance, you wished to write a sketch of your life to indicate why you decided upon some step of major importance to you, many minor incidents would be omitted and only those that influenced the decision would be included. To control the selection

of these relevant incidents, a summarizing sentence (or *thesis* or *theme*) might read,

The influences of (a) my early environment, (b) my abilities and interests in precise work and in caring for people, (c) my Aunt Helen, and (d) my successes in school led me to seek a college training in dentistry.

The lettered phrases would serve as controlling ideas for each of the four sections. Writing such a sentence before you organize a paper is perhaps the simplest means of insuring a well-organized paper. The sentence itself may or may not, as seems desirable, appear actually in the paper itself, but a reader would have little difficulty in writing such a summarizing statement if a paper were written with that as the guide.

A Different Kind of Instance

Not always do we limit ourselves to giving specific examples of instances of our controlling idea. Suppose we had finally written a paragraph of which the controlling idea was "Carefulness in observing traffic signals often prevents accidents." Using the above methods, we would fill our paragraph with instances that showed how or why this idea was true. To make our explanation clearer and more interesting, however, we might have included, "Just as it is important for a railroad engineer to watch the semaphore to see whether it shows red, green, or amber, to know whether he must stop, continue, or slow up, so must the auto driver watch the traffic semaphore."

Obviously this is an example of *carefulness* outside of auto driving. We have used an example of driving outside the field of our controlling idea. It is a comparison, and the sign of such comparisons is usually "like" or "as." "Ink runs out of my pen as out of a bottle!"

In like manner, the use of contrasting instances or examples may liven or clear up a difficult situation. "Our refrigerator does not sound like a sewing machine, but is as quiet as an electric clock."

Polishing the Paragraph

Just as sentences should be rather closely linked in descriptive paragraphs, so should they be in paragraphs of discussion or explanation. Generally speaking, paragraphs that are well planned in advance and present material that contributes to only *one controlling idea* will be well fastened together, and the details will blend as salt and sugar (but not sugar and sand) do in water. However, there still may be the "choppiness" that we found in the descriptive paragraphs. To remove it here, we use the same principle used in removing it there. The devices closely resemble each other.

Where we used a "time order" (chronological) in description, we may use a logical order in our explanatory papers, proceeding from the simple to the difficult, from the specific to the general, or, reversing the order, from the difficult to the simple, the general to the specific. Instead of using letters (a, b, c,) or numbers (1, 2, 3,) to represent the relations between ob-

jects or ideas, as in description (though we use those too), we may include a simple pen-and-ink drawing with the parts numbered and lettered as we might in explaining how a pump worked. (See Chapter V.) And finally, since details of explanation should grow naturally out of preceding details, as the details of description were dependent on each other, we can indicate this dependence with "nails" as we did in description. The simplest form of this was, you recall, the repetition of words from one sentence to another, sometimes beginning one sentence with a word that ended the sentence just preceding. Such "nails" are underlined in the following example.

One of the most distasteful topics for a student to have to study is *composition*. *Composition*, however, need not be boring or distasteful if instructors will try to understand the needs and interests of the *student*. A *student* is quick to respond to instruction when it is geared to the *demands* of his everyday life. Such *demands* might be . . .

But a little repetition goes a long way; much repetition becomes tiring. To avoid this fault we may make our repetition less obvious by substituting words that mean much the same thing; these words may be synonyms (if too many are not used) or pronouns. The illustration could be re-written like this.

One of the most distasteful topics for a student to have to study is *composition*. This *subject*, however, need not be boring or distasteful if instructors will try to understand the needs and interests of the *student*. *He* is quick to respond to

instruction when it is geared to the *demands* of his everyday life. *These* might be . . .

More obvious "nails" (they might be called "spikes") reveal the exact order in which ideas are presented. Since links of this sort are frank, they must be carefully used. The ideas must come in the order they are labeled, for unless they do they will defeat their own purpose. "Five" must come naturally after "four." In the illustration, the sentences between each "spike" are omitted.

The *first* reason for learning to drive a car is . . . The *second* and perhaps more important reason is . . . The *last* reason, which must appeal to thoughtful people, is . . .

Devices for linking paragraphs are much like these and will be discussed later.

Suggested Problem

Examine the following breezy paper for linking. Underline the words or phrases that serve as "nails"; by lines and arrows indicate what portions are linked.

On Critics

The world is full of critics. We are all critics. You and I are critics. As one correspondent has said, the world is full of dictators—we are all dictators. The same may be said of critics. All human beings are endowed with the instinct for criticism. Animals criticize. The dog wags his tail in approval or growls his disapproval. In the dog kingdom, certain dogs are superior critics; they are the leaders of the pack. Their bark is final.

As I have said, we are all critics to a certain extent; but,

as we found in the dog kingdom, certain critics have more power. They are pointed out; they are significant. Take the chief hounds of the cinema world. My goodness! This one gave the picture 6 stars! We simply must see it! The critic's word is final. But *Ecstasy*, Hm! Cheap! Immoral! An insult to the cinema world! I enjoyed the picture thoroughly, and I marveled at the producer's ability to stay clear of the cheap ten-cent theater's pictures. I'm not the only one who enjoyed the picture. *Ecstasy* stayed for six—or was it ten?—weeks at the local theater. I'm sure that it wasn't shown to empty seats. Why do we take the word of the critic!

Perhaps I should change the title to "Criticism of Critics"—but I must go on. Let's look at the book reviewers.

Floyd Dell tells us in his book *Homecoming* that once he wrote a dramatic review of a certain cheap book and that the book stores sold out before the next morning. Gertrude Stein has been accused of actually deceiving the reviewers. She admits that she published a book—something new, "automatic writing," I believe. It must have been new, for all of the reviewers praised it highly. Miss Stein laughed up her sleeve. Look at the marvelous display of reviews *Gone With the Wind* received; yet many people consider the book only moderately interesting. The reviews make the book, it seems; the book does not make the reviews. Another incident—Jolan Faldes' *The Street of the Fishing Cat* won \$19,000 in the All Nation Novel Competition contest. The reviewers regarded it only as "vaguely charming" and "mildly pathetic." Then, too, just as reviewers seem to make the book, so does the author's reputation. The reviewer's reasoning apparently runs like this: "The author has written a 'best seller'; ergo, this book is a good book."

Despite all these apparent things, the book stores sell out as soon as one reviewer gets fanatically excited about a new book. What this world needs is a school for training critics—yes! for training critics of critics' criticisms! Clarence Day,

in *This Simian World*, has said that we take too much for granted; we have lost our personal insight, our own intuition. The critics do our thinking for us.

This situation should not continue. We should regain the powers we have given up. If, for example, Walter Brooks appreciates a certain novel and praises the book for its rapid action and vivid characterization, how can each of us appreciate the book in the same way? Appreciation is not a material thing; it is not something you can see or touch. But it is a living, *personal* reaction. It is a different experience for each person, and, therefore, in this respect cannot be universal.

The pleasant appeal of the explanatory paragraph to the ear can be increased if much the same devices are used as those suggested for the descriptive paragraphs. Slow rhythms usually accompany profound or solemn thoughts; short, or rapid, or staccato rhythms accompany prosaic or startling thoughts. The two passages that are quoted below illustrate how different prose rhythms can be, though perhaps we are accustomed to think that distinctive rhythms are to be found only in poetry. In the second passage—that by Sir Thomas Browne—you will notice that he has skilfully chosen the sounds of his words as carefully as he has controlled his rhythms. The effects of the “y,” “r,” “l,” “ah,” and “n” sounds are especially noticeable.

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention . . . Reading maketh a full man; con-

ference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not.

—Sir Francis Bacon.

Now since these dead bones have already outlasted the living ones of Methuselah, and in a yard under ground, and thin walls of clay, outworn all the strong and specious buildings above it; and quietly rested under the drums and trappings of three conquests; what prince might not gladly say,

Sic ego componi versus in ossa velim?

—Sir Thomas Browne.

CHAPTER IV

WORDS HAVE MANY MEANINGS

"There is nothing like eating hay when you feel faint," said the King, as he munched away at some of it.

"I should think throwing water on you would be better," said Alice.

"I didn't say that it would be *better*. I said, 'There is nothing *like* eating hay when you feel faint.'"

In the light of the remarks that were made at the beginning of Chapter II, it is regrettable we must admit that the King said what he meant. We might take refuge in our search for the means for saying what we mean by protesting that we can take no responsibility for the meanings other people read into our words. Alack and alas! We ourselves fall into the same trap when we read what others have written. Unless we want to mislead people (which we sometimes do!) we try to prevent them from getting too many meanings from what we have written.

The present discussion will not pretend to go into philosophical convolutions about the meaning of meaning. We shall be concerned, rather, with a description of the strange alchemy that is at work immediately when words are placed near each other. Observe what happens to the simple statement

The roof is on the house

when we change it to

The treat is on the house.

Alchemy indeed! The phrase *on the house* has a somewhat different meaning in the second sentence from that which it had in the first. Since the sentences are completely parallel in structure, we should have some difficulty in explaining the change in meaning from the point of view of grammar. When we have written something that does not quite make sense, or makes sense we did not intend, we have overlooked the possible meanings that might be taken. This is the spoor of the game we shall hunt. The method must be simply a statement of what different situations may arise, to the purpose that we may become increasingly *aware* of them. Advertisers, for example, make use of our propensity for reading into words and phrases meanings that were not there—or at least would not be found to be there in a court of law.

PART I

Punctuation Gives Meaning: The Comma

The simplest way to manipulate meaning is to use punctuation marks. We can change the meaning of a phrase simply by inserting commas. Notice the difference in meaning between parts of the first and second sentences, only the use of commas varying from one sentence to the other.

1. The girls wore blue, rose, green, black and white dresses.
2. The girls wore blue, rose, green, black, and white dresses.

In the first sentence it is possible that only four dresses are referred to; in the second, there are certainly five.

Sometimes we can control the meaning of preceding phrases and clauses simply by the use of commas. Examine the following sentences for the meanings that suggest themselves on a first reading of each, and notice the change that comes to pass when commas are inserted.

1. While I was mowing the dog yelped.
2. Injured the man you say crept away.
3. Having the book ends my difficulty.
4. Having the book I had no difficulty.
5. When she got there the cupboard was bare.
6. Panicky citizens raced through the streets.

Some of the sentences are not improved at all when commas are inserted, but others are.

It will be noticed that the *meaning* of the sentence may be of two kinds: (1) simple sense, and (2) esthetic or emotional sense. Compare

1. Panicky, citizens raced through the streets,

with

2. Panicky citizens raced through the streets.

In (1), the comma suggests that under the situation the citizens would naturally be panicky; even suggesting that they were panicky is extra information and merely emphasizes the fact that they were. However, in (2) the only citizens, perhaps, that raced through the streets were those who were panicky. Further, it emphasizes how they ran: "Groundlessly fearful" running would not, obviously, be "joyous" running.

Sometimes failure to place a comma before *and*, *but*, and *for* when they connect clauses and not just words or phrases may cause the same mistaken ideas as when it is omitted after certain sequences of words in preceding constructions.

It is to be noted that most of the mistaken ideas come to mind only when the sentence is read the first time. A re-reading of the sentence usually straightens the matter out. We want to avoid, however, just this necessity for the reader to read a sentence twice to get our meaning; hence we should place commas before *and*, *but*, and *for* when they appear in situations named above. In very short sentences the comma may be omitted.

1. He dropped the hammer and it broke the glass.
2. He dropped the hammer and the glass smashed to bits.
3. The room burst into flames and smoke almost immediately filled the halls.
4. He ran out for the thick smoke nearly overwhelmed him.
5. He felt tired but happy is the man who can at once stop working and rest when he is tired.

Occasionally commas suggest meaning that is not definitely stated; that is, commas may stand for omitted words. In the sentences below, observe that the commas stand for the *and* that has been left out. If the comma is also omitted, the meaning of the series immediately changes.

1. He liked chocolate and milk and coffee and tea.
2. He liked chocolate, milk, coffee, and tea.

3. He liked chocolate milk, coffee and tea.
4. He liked chocolate, milk and coffee, and tea.

The words for which commas stand may not always be conjunctions.

1. On the seventeenth day of March in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and thirty-seven in the city of Minneapolis in the county of Hennepin in the state of Minnesota.
2. Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota, March 17, 1937.

The Comma Can Also Control Artistic Effect

So far we have considered only how the comma can establish or change simple sense; it can also control somewhat the esthetic sense. The effect of the dash (in effect, a glorified comma) is illustrated in the third of the three sentences below.

1. He wandered heartbroken among the gravestones.
(Simple statement of fact.)
2. He wandered, heartbroken, among the gravestones.
(Additional information.)
3. He wandered—heartbroken—among the gravestones.

Perhaps we feel impelled to read the second sentence with a slight pause and lowered voice on *heartbroken*. In the third, we pause longer and raise our voice in pronouncing *heartbroken*.

Much the same result can be effected by the use of italics. (In manuscript, underlining indicates that a word is to be printed in italics.) The sentence in the

examples above becomes somewhat different in its effect.

4. He wandered *heartbroken* among the gravestones.

The effect of italicized words is, to be sure, much that of the parenthetical expression that is set off by commas, but the shift in stress and in meaning of the italicized words in the following examples cannot be indicated by commas. And this is in keeping with the meaning of parentheses—a parenthetical remark is not emphasized; rather the opposite effect is obtained. The sentence is by Walter de la Mare as quoted by Jespersen.

1. *Won't* you come and dine with me today?
2. Won't *you* come and dine with me today?
3. Won't you come and *dine* with me today?
4. Won't you come and dine with *me* today?
5. Won't you come and dine with me *today*?

Our parenthetical discussion of the use of italics is justified perhaps because we are, after all, considering the mechanical control of meaning. Commas have a further use in that they sometimes slow up the movement of a sentence and provoke the reader to pause, here and there, and to savor the effect of each thought, and image, in a passage. Dickens in the passage quoted previously uses the comma and parenthetical expressions to bring his stagecoach from a gallop to a stop. You can almost hear the horses break from a trot into a walk and draw to a stop.

. . . Yoho, down countless turnings, and through countless mazy ways, until an old Inn-yard is gained, and Tom Pinch, getting down, quite stunned and giddy, is in London.

The effect of the retarding commas is emphasized by the falling stress in the final word, *Lon-don*.

The whole effect could be quite ruined by changing the period to a triple period which would make the passage trail off in suggestion, but not stop.

. . . And Tom Pinch, getting down, quite stunned and giddy, is in London . . .

The Semicolon

To block off complex or simply larger portions of a sentence, such as clauses, the comma needed the help of a conjunction. The semicolon, being stronger, is able to replace both the comma and conjunctions like *and*, *but*, and *for*. Particularly, when confusion of meaning results from the use of too many commas, the semicolon furnishes a positive signpost.

1. He met people from Seattle, Washington, Washington, District of Columbia, Detroit, Michigan, Texas, Maryland, and Nevada, Iowa.

Consulting an atlas, we find that the meaning of the sentence becomes, with the aid of semicolons,

2. He met people from Seattle, Washington; Washington, District of Columbia; Detroit, Michigan; Texas, Maryland; and Nevada, Iowa.

A more common use of the semicolon appears in the long sentence that has many commas:

When a man has little to do, he tries, among other things, to develop a hobby, such as collecting stamps, books or pictures; but, if he actually has little to do, he should, before looking elsewhere, look well to the little he is actually doing.

The Apostrophe

Though everyone understands when to use the apostrophe, there is a tendency to omit it because the meaning resulting from its use is not apparent. As a matter of linguistic history, the apostrophe usually indicates the omission of a letter—most frequently in the possessive case, and by analogy possession is indicated in Modern English often by an apostrophe that does not indicate omission. In Old English, God's ghost (spirit) was *godes ghaſt*, *godes* having two syllables. But in the expression *eight o'clock*, the apostrophe indicates the omission of more than a single letter. The expression used to be, *eight of the clock*.

The Period, Exclamation Point, and Question Mark

As with apostrophes, we know when to use these marks, but we forget that unless we do the meaning of a sentence may not be clear.

1. How I like to swim. (In what fashion I like to swim.)
2. How I like to swim! (I thoroughly enjoy swimming.)
3. Would you like to swim! (Of course you would.)
4. Would you like to swim? (I don't know whether you would or not.)

Real or pretended doubt may be indicated in other connections by the interrogation point.

1. Quintilian (35 -100? A.D.)
2. He was a good (?) provider.

In similar manner may the exclamation point indicate irony.

1. The chief's conduct was commended (!) by the council.

The Colon and Parentheses

These dissimilar marks are grouped here because they are only occasionally used. The colon is used to indicate conventional meanings,

Mark 1:13 6:15 P.M.

and the grouping of a long list of articles, or items.

The marks of punctuation consist of several conventional signs: the comma, dash, semicolon, colon, apostrophe, quotation marks, parentheses, interrogation point, and exclamation point.

A miscomprehension concerning the use of parentheses should be pointed out. They do not, in manuscript or print, indicate omission. Words to be omitted should have a single line drawn through them and not have parentheses placed around them.

1. Omission: very—much—pleasant
2. Parenthetical: It is (*you* know!) a very pleasant way.

In the second example, dashes or commas might serve as well as parentheses; it depends upon how much informality is desired or how much emphasis.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks indicate a direct speech or a special word.

1. I said, "You are not the first to tell me, 'Go peddle your fish!'"
2. The simple word "of" has many uses. "Of" might be called "the lexicographer's delight."

Punctuation contributes much to the control of meaning, but with the manuals of composition and publishers' style books indicating but few positive conventions for punctuation the writer is urged to examine his sentences carefully to see whether he has punctuated simply to salvage a poorly constructed sentence. Though punctuation is an aid to clear expression of ideas it cannot substitute for care in sentence construction. The use of punctuation marks depends, clearly, upon saying what you mean.

Suggested Problem

From an examination of sentences in a short story or of a magazine article, find as many types of punctuation as you can. With each type, state what you believe to be the meaning conveyed by the mark of punctuation. Do not merely say, for example, "The comma before *and* was used for clearness." Be more specific. "The *and* does not connect the word immediately preceding and following it; the *and* connects two larger ideas as expressed in the two clauses; hence a comma is necessary to prevent ambiguity."

PART II

In Part I, we have seen how the meaning of a word may be changed simply by the insertion or omission of a mark of punctuation. Before us lies the fascinating problem of what happens to the meanings of words simply when they are placed together in a sentence. In Chapter I the general method for determining standards of usage in compiling a dictionary was mentioned, and associated with that is the answer to "Is this the right word?" Because words taken singly may have any one of many meanings, dictionaries frequently include sentences that clearly show the meaning of the word in special instances.

The question of "rightness" in the selection of words depends, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, upon the situation for which the words are chosen. We select details in terms of an impression or a controlling idea. No great acumen is required to perceive that a difference in tone may result from the choice of one word rather than another. We know that the inadvertent use of a word may cause us embarrassment; whereas another word that is synonymous may cause no embarrassment. For example, we may say that someone is *in love with*, is *crazy about*, or is *that way about* another person. The three expressions illustrate three levels of standards for selecting words for a purpose—*standard literary English*, *colloquial English*, and *slang*, respectively.

The first level, *standard literary English*, is com-

posed of those words in the dictionary that have no tags, such as *provincial*, *colloquial*, *slang*, *vulgar*, *poetical*, *local U. S.*, or *scientific*. Words that are classed as standard literary English have passed all tests of usage; they are approved wherever good English is written or spoken among cultivated people. The writer who places correctness above all else will do well to use words so classed and to avoid any words that are placed in any other category, *unless his purpose permits their use*. Obviously words that are tagged *scientific* are proper in papers that are written formally on scientific subjects, although some have entered the common language, e.g., tuberculosis.

Standard literary English is specifically required in all formal or set discourse. No other kind of English would appear in an engraved formal invitation, for example, or in a formal term paper, master's thesis, or doctor's dissertation. Letters to high dignitaries, even if friendly, would avoid any suggestion of close intimacy, by including only words of this formal type. Likewise, in keeping with the solemnity and importance of profound subjects, and in keeping with the beauty of a fragile emotion or thought, flippant, colloquial, provincial, and similar words usually may be avoided. If

A thing of beauty is a joy forever

be changed by substituting the slang word "wow" for joy, the result is absurd. We must not understand from this that nothing but standard literary English ever ap-

pears in poems—the poems of Robert Burns are shining examples of another choice. We must understand, rather, that as in all writing (can this be emphasized too often?) the standards for acceptable vocabulary depend upon the situation in which and the purpose for which they are to be used.

The second level in our illustration is that of *colloquial English*. *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition, Unabridged*, has something to say here. Under *colloquial* appears these statements: "Acceptable and appropriate in ordinary conversational context, as in intimate speech among cultivated people, familiar letters, in informal speeches or writings, but not in formal written discourse . . . Colloquial speech may be as correct as formal speech." In the entry under *cant*, this additional comment is made: "Colloquialisms are expressions possible in familiar, but not formal or set, discourse; the term carries no derogatory implications."

In a way, the difference between the use of standard literary English and colloquial English is much like the difference between the wearing of a dinner jacket and a business suit in the evening. When added formality is required, the swallow-tailed coat is worn—but, we may note, cultivated people wear either dinner jacket or business suit on many occasions.

The changes in our language become perceptible in colloquialisms, for the hue and cry against new uses of words has died away by the time the words have become standard literary English. Colloquial expres-

sions appear as such only in descriptive, not legislative, grammars; dictionaries, too, do not agree in classifying them, the conservatives listing the words as slang. The purist in language (a person difficult to define) may still object, but his widespread fingers are pushed aside by the tide.

Slang, the third level of our illustration, presents other questions concerning standards of usage. In the main, what has been said about the standards of correctness for colloquial English obtains here. Custom decrees what slang phrases shall be considered correct and up to date. Good taste and the purpose of our paper usually forces us to omit slang. Slang all too often is expected to serve in the place of many other acceptable words, yet slang is not often specific nor in its application concrete. As we develop taste in words, we find that the thousands of acceptable words listed in our dictionaries serve us pretty well. We may liven our papers with a little slang as we season our food; too much seasoning—too much slang—spoils the flavor.¹

Practical Considerations

Select your words according to the type of paper that you are writing. That idea should sound familiar to you by now! Since we have made use of charts in the two preceding chapters we may find charts of use to us

¹ Students who would like to go somewhat more deeply into questions of language are invited to read the very brief discussion to be found in the Appendix. For more extended discussions, they may consult the selected references to be found listed at the end of the chapter. These books, I might add, are far from being dull reading.

now in determining when to use the three kinds of language just discussed. Some suggestions for sorting out these three will be given later.

This chart is not intended to be a Ready Reference for Writing Papers; it is intended merely to indicate broad, general tendencies of taste. The audience, the approach to the subject, as well as the subject itself, determine finally what your judgment will be. When the chart indicates that colloquial English may be used, it means, obviously, that colloquial English may be used as it naturally arises but not that all standard literary English words are taboo! Where, however, standard literary English is indicated, the writer should avoid colloquialisms or slang.

A Guide to Correct Usage

TYPE OF PAPER	KIND OF ENGLISH	EXAMPLES
Committee Report	S. L. E.	Report of Committee Investigating Student Social Life
Committee Report	Colloq.	Report of Committee Arranging a Picnic
Term Paper	S. L. E.	England's Imperialism The Labor Problems of a Rural Community
Term Paper	S. L. E. or Colloq.	Autobiography Biography My Home Town
Informal Essay	S. L. E.	Literary Treasures Apology for Idlers

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TYPE OF PAPER	KIND OF ENGLISH	EXAMPLES
Informal Essay	Colloq.	The Artist Drives a Bargain I Like Tea! Rambles in Rome
Friendly Letters	S. L. E.	My dear Professor Hunt: My dear Aunt Martha:
Friendly Letters	Colloq. or Slang	Dear Jack, Dear Aunt Peg, Dearest Joan,
Short Stories	Much depends on the dialogue.	

From what has been said, it may appear that standard literary English has only the doubtful virtue of being *formal*. Indeed, the emphasis seems to be placed there. The quotation from *Webster's* concerning colloquial English, "Acceptable and appropriate in ordinary conversational context . . . but not in formal written discourse . . ." seems to degrade colloquialisms and at the same time urge that they be replaced only by something as chilly and arid as a formal reception. Let us rather consider *formal* as being *conventional*—not stiff and stilted; standard literary English follows a *form* that is received without question by cultivated people. It is politely impersonal yet pleasing. It does *not* insist that you write "He had nothing *at which* to look" instead of "He had nothing to look *at*," although it does prefer that you write "I must consult my *family*" instead of "I must consult my *folks*." If stilted literary usage is avoided (that is, the grammatically correct but clumsy), then the writer is not likely to be consid-

ered "bookish." Good writing may have all of the smoothness of cultured speech—in fact, it should have greater beauty and preciseness because the writer may mold and remold his ideas. Conversation does not permit this revision.

Paradoxically, conversation is at once wordy and curt. Where standard literary English would say "I cannot help liking him" colloquial English would say "I can't help but like him." As will be pointed out later, conversation takes short cuts; if an inaccurate statement is made it can very quickly be corrected. That which is printed remains unchanged.

The difference between the two kinds of language of our discussion is a subtle one, and this subtlety is made very difficult to perceive by the fact that we hear and read colloquial English far more often than standard literary English. And only the most recently revised editions of dictionaries can help us to make the distinction. If we wish to be completely *safe*, we will use forms that bear no tags in the dictionaries at hand. Or we may strive to be such excellent craftsmen that we become extremely sensitive to the effects of language and can readily know which expressions are better than others.

The student who writes freely—who "lets go" in his writing—very likely will include a great many colloquialisms. He will *enthuse* about a trip without realizing that in standard literary English he should *be enthusiastic* about his trip. Has he committed a serious

error? Not at all! He has simply used a perfectly proper colloquialism. The word has come into common usage in cultivated speech. In fact, as the crude guide to correct usage indicates, a student may properly use colloquialisms for much of his writing. Many students are surprised to have common words and phrases pointed out to them as colloquialisms. Have they not heard them frequently used by educated people? Have they not found them in current literature? To be sure they have.

To some, the expressions that appear in the following list will be incorrect, but recourse to the second edition of *Webster's* will reveal them correct for cultivated speech.

1. *None* of these books *are* good.
2. *Either* of these methods *are* acceptable.
3. He is *kind of* boring.
4. *These kind* of knaves *are* treacherous.
5. *Who* did you see?
6. There were some of those *whom* we thought would come.
7. *Can* you come to the picnic?
8. He took to figures *like* a duck.
9. The board gave *their* permission for the dance.
10. *Will* you do it? (simple future)
11. I *will loan* you the book. (simple future)
12. The shirt *shrunk*.
13. She *sung* the song very well.
14. Her smile is *intriguing*.
15. *Try and* climb the tree.
16. It is *me*.
17. Dear *me!* (Dear *I?*)

Must you use these expressions in your writing? Of course not; unless you find them natural to your expression you will not find yourself using them. But if you naturally use these, they cannot be considered incorrect wherever colloquial English may be used.

What has been said about standard literary English and colloquial English should give you courage to write your native language as you see and hear it today.

Unfortunately we cannot leave the question of standards of usage without pointing out some unpleasant facts. We all occasionally write things that are completely *wrong*. Perhaps none of us can have the complete assurance of the old lady: "I ain't never made but one mistake in grammar," she declared triumphantly, "and I seen that one when I done it!"

In Part III of this chapter we shall probe into the causes of some of our errors, but there remain some that can be traced directly to simple ignorance or carelessness. A few common errors which continue to occur in speech and writing may be mentioned to put us on our guard.

1. The weather *effects* all of us.
2. I was sure that I had *affected* a cure.
3. Everything is *alright* now.
4. He *could of* done it.
5. This exercise is *different than* that one.
6. Harry divided the cake *between* the three children.
7. I couldn't *except* the invitation.
8. He refused, *irregardless* of their plight.
9. *Lay* down!
10. Obeying, he *laid* down.

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11. *Most* anyone can see these mistakes.
12. I really don't care for the money; it's the *principal* of the whole affair that bothers me.
13. The *principle* mistake is in your punctuation of the conversation.
14. The reason *is because* I don't want to explain anything more.
15. *Set* down, please!
16. *This here* cake is better than *that there* pie.
17. Oh, he'll get *used of* it.
18. He *used to could* shoot very well.
19. His lecture went a great *ways* toward changing my viewpoint.
20. I wish he *would have* said he wanted this manuscript sooner.

Strange as it may seem, even these that we have termed errors are correct! They are "correct" in *vulgar* usage! For educated people, however, they are still serious errors.

Because the type of error listed is common, yet varies in specific form or word almost with every person, each student should keep a list of those that he commits, and he should seek to rid his writing of them as promptly as he can. The "meaning" conveyed by such expressions to a reader or listener is decidedly not to the advantage of the writer or speaker.

Writing and Speaking

Since we are concerned in our study with the methods for conveying meaning, we must realize that though in writing we may use expressions and constructions that are used in speaking, there are certain lim-

itations to be found in writing that do not appear in speaking.

Part III of this chapter will go deeper into the difficulties of understanding what is written and spoken, but some general points may well be made here. The give and take of conversation is missing in writing. This we will understand more fully when we consider the friendly letter. Gesture, tone of voice, the presence of objects being discussed, all make loose statements understandable in conversation, but they are missing in writing. In conversation the tone of voice may indicate one meaning in "He is a fine fellow," by emphasizing *fine* in such a way that the hearer knows the opposite is meant. The writer of western stories for the *pulps* knows well how important it is to have the tone of voice and gesture indicated. "He'll get away all right," sneered Deadly Dick, patting his six shooter.

The connection between the written and the spoken word is very close. When we read silently, we *hear* the words and the pauses. Commas, as suggested above, are often inserted to show how the passage should be read *aloud* as well as to show the meaning. The effect of retarding commas is decidedly one of an appeal to the ear. Without the comma after *shaving* to indicate the break in meaning and the pause in reading aloud, the sentence, "While I was shaving the dog yelped," causes the reader or listener to stumble. Remembering to consider how a sentence would sound if read aloud is a good test to prevent misunderstanding.

These possible misunderstandings force us to con-

sider very carefully how we select our words and how we put them together in sentences. Because we can re-read written sentences, meanings can be wrestled with until we are confident we have the meaning that was intended; but the spoken word is gone in a moment. We cannot pause to do battle with evasive expressions, because new ones are constantly being offered for consideration. The outstanding characteristics of the oral paper are its simplicity of language, its simplicity of organization, its frequent repetition of the same idea in much the same terminology, and its relative brevity. Specifically, these characteristics become: (1) common words of few syllables, (2) relatively short sentences, (3) the use of the same words instead of confusing synonyms, and (4) a length not so great as to prevent the paper's being read in an hour's time or less.

Except for the time limit, all of those characteristics might be considered those of the written paper. Other matters, however, establish a difference between written and oral work. The economy required by the cost of printer's ink and paper compels the writer to be compact. Each word must contribute clearly to the main idea. This compactness places even greater demands upon the writer to convey his personality, his individuality under circumstances far less favorable than those of the lecture platform. The writer is not beside the reader to ask, "Are there any questions?" or to give the answers. If the meaning is there, but only a struggle with the sentences will reveal it, the reader is likely to turn away to clearer, more interesting reading.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation¹ is related to meaning in only a limited sense, but since variations in pronunciation follow much the same patterns as variations in meaning, a consideration of it is not entirely out of place here. Pronunciation has to do with the sounds given letters or combinations of letters within words, and with the accents placed upon syllables in a word. *Usage* has two pronunciations, both acceptable, though one is common only in America. The change in pronunciation does not, however, change its meaning; but the shift in accent in the word *submarine*, as it changes from a noun to an adjective, illustrates how meaning may shift with pronunciation.

1. I saw a submarine.
2. The submarine mine exploded.

Whenever the pronunciation changes with meaning, the dependence is of pronunciation upon meaning, not the reverse. For example, *read* takes one or another pronunciation according to the meaning that is intended. In sentence number one below, what the pronunciation is cannot be determined from the sentence alone. This is not true of the other two sentences.

1. I read this book.
2. Tomorrow I shall read this book.
3. Last summer I read this book.

¹ For a detailed account of pronunciation, the student is referred to "A Guide to Pronunciation" and "A Synopsis of Words Differently Pronounced by Different Orthoëpists" in *Webster's International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged, Second Edition*.

A careful study of the articles in *Webster's* will reveal that we can speak of *the* pronunciation of a word only in limited circumstances. To use the full sound value of *and* in an expression like *bread and butter* produces what for want of better term has been called "school ma'am" pronunciation. In speech we elide sounds in English much as we do in German or French. *Bread and butter* becomes *bread 'n' butter*; *ham and eggs* becomes *ham 'n' eggs*, if not *ham 'n' deggs*. *That* has two different pronunciations, as well as meanings, in "that that nation so conceived"—the first *that* being a relative pronoun pronounced more as if it were spelled *thet*, and the second *that* a demonstrative pronoun pronounced as commonly it is. In like fashion, *interesting* becomes *intresting*, but not *instering*.

Sometimes the struggle to make all people accept single pronunciations overlooks another kind of meaning that is conveyed by pronunciation, namely, information concerning the person speaking. Northerners are charmed by a Southern accent; Middle Westerners, intrigued by an Eastern accent, and everyone, irritated by a pseudo-English accent. If, because of the radio, we shall ultimately have the same language habits throughout the country, what part should be favored? Should Georgia have the honor of shaping our pronunciations? Vermont? Dialectal differences give more charm and information than they take away, it would appear; surely we could not arbitrarily destroy them!

Usage determines, then, what pronunciation shall be,

and any study of the sounds of language must consider the part that meaning also plays in relation to sound.

PART III

Our consideration of the many meanings of words has inevitably been linked with reading, for the two are inseparable. Even the most perfect of radio transmitters and receivers distort what is sent out or received. We human instruments, no matter how perfect we may be, distort the meanings of what we say and what we hear. The "howls" of a regenerative radio receiving set (were they not called "bloopers"?) are not much worse than those set up within our own regenerative use of words, for words are defined only by other words that must be defined by still other words. We use words to represent actual situations or the *core* of situations. This representative or symbolic use of words gets us into many difficulties. When we come to think of it, we are amazed that we get along as well as we do. Even such a simple request as "Please pass the butter" might logically, out of context, have more than one meaning. Absurdly, our request might mean, "Please walk past the butter!"

In an earlier chapter, we smugly decided that we would say what we mean. And that supposedly settled the matter. However, the sending of messages does not insure their reception. Fogs, magnetic storms, and whirlwinds may suddenly arise between the sender and the receiver. The receiver must not remain passive but must strive diligently to understand what was

sent. Though we shall be concerned here with *receiving*, not sending, we must realize that to anticipate the difficulties of the receiver is to make our sending more perfect. This material will, then, guide the writer to self-criticism. By impersonating the receiver, the writer can be surer that he is saying what he means and is meaning what he says.

Students are familiar with the statement that unless a writer has a large vocabulary he cannot write and that unless a reader has a large vocabulary he cannot understand what he reads. One important factor in reading seems to have been overlooked. *If a student knows the definitions of all of the words in a given passage, he still may not be able to understand the passage!* This difficulty becomes apparent when we attempt to read for the first time a subject with which we are not familiar. At first we think that the writer has not said clearly what he intended to say, but later, when we become familiar with the subject, we see that he said exactly what he wished to. Students unfamiliar with the considerations that lie around the discussion in the brief passage quoted below will feel, perhaps, that the writer of it was unnecessarily vague. As a matter of fact, the paragraph is a very clear statement.

Any one discourse admits only one of these ends as the principal. Nevertheless, in discoursing on a subject, many things may be introduced, which are more immediately and apparently directed to some of the other ends of speaking, and not to that which is the chief intent of the whole. But then these other and immediate ends are in effect but means,

and must be rendered conducive to that which is the primary intention. Accordingly, the propriety or the impropriety of the introduction of such secondary ends, will always be inferred from their subserviency or want of subserviency to that end, which is, in respect of them, the ultimate.

Few students will be unable to define each word in the passage, yet it is also true that few students will be able to explain what the passage means. It probably will have the strange sound of a foreign language to most of them. As we shall see, the problems of understanding need not be found in as absurd interpretations of sentences as "Please pass the butter" or in as profound a passage as the one quoted. Around us daily we find advertisements, political speeches, texts, scientific treatises, course assignments and lectures, and formal announcements that are closed to us because we cannot understand what they say, even if we know the meanings of the single words that make them up.

That words depend for meaning upon the passages in which they appear, students well know. Perhaps it is more evident in translating from a foreign language. A student translating a paragraph of French in class may forget the meaning of a word, but he can frequently guess its meaning from what goes before and what comes after. Since this and what was said above are true, we clearly cannot depend upon dictionaries for the interpretation of writing.

If dictionaries cannot give us all of the help we need, what can we do? Well, to date, interpretation, like thinking, cannot be taught, but some of the processes

can be described. There are no "right" answers in interpretation. There are merely some answers that are more acceptable than others. We shall proceed by examining very simple, and sometimes absurd, sentences and passages, and then pass on to more difficult ones. Students will find hundreds of opportunities daily for applying what they learn here.

The curious twist that our minds take comes out in the first four sentences of a story that one student wrote for children.

Once upon a time there lived a very poor little girl. She could not have all of the nice clothes that all the other girls and boys had. Nor did she have the nice toys, such as dolls and picture books, that they had. But one very nice thing about this little girl (whose name was Ann) was that she believed in fairies.

Her use of "nice" is, according to the dictionaries, quite correct, but with the other words in the passage, she has given a very interesting turn to her meaning. By using "nice" with "about," she has completely gone off the track. At first, the possession of toys and clothes simply indicated that other girls and boys had more money, but now the phrase "But one very nice thing about" turns the meaning into one that suggests that because Ann was poor and did not possess these nice things she was not herself nice! To reduce this to absurdity, we may understand the significance of the "about" if we recall the song, "There's something about a soldier that is fine, fine, fine!" and say, "Of course! The 'something' is a pretty girl!" When the student understood (as a "re-

ceiver") what she had written (as a "sender"), she wrote the last sentence of the passage in this way.

But one nice thing that this little girl (her name was Ann) did have was a belief in fairies.

Now the interpretation is clear, namely, though Ann was poor she had one valuable possession.

The student must not at this point become impatient and declare that all of this is so simple and childish that he might just as well skip it. Just such simple explanations and understandings will lead us to far more difficult problems.

We are not here concerned with those strange quirks of the human behavior that make people misread newspaper headlines, signs, or phrases within sentences. Books on psychology have long pointed out some of the tricks that our eyes and ears play upon us. For example, one psychologist thought that he heard the sounds of distant thunder, when as a matter of fact the stillness of the room in which he sat made him so hear the sounds of his dog's heavy breathing while it was asleep. Another psychologist tells how a man bent upon buying himself an inexpensive summer hat saw from a street car a sign that read, "Good Hats a Quarter." He descended from the street car and approached the store. There he discovered that the sign read, "God Hates a Quitter." Often ideas that are fixed in our minds make us see things as our ideas would have them. This is especially true of students in class. At a time when they are surest that they have understood, they are often most

in the dark; hence the great number of "boners" that appear from time to time in students' papers. Our problem is not that of such quirks, of such mental typographical errors.

We are concerned with problems that arise when words have been accurately perceived but are not grouped to make a complete meaning. In geometry we are told that the whole is equal to the sum of all of its parts. In comprehending what is written, however, we find that the whole may be greater than the sum of all its parts. To put it another way, just as single chemical elements lose their individual characteristics when they combine to form a compound or as two compounds lose their characteristics when they combine to form another compound, so words lose their individual characteristics when they combine to express an idea. Sodium, a gleaming, silvery metal, may combine with chlorine, a greenish-yellow gas, to form salt. Carbolic acid and formaldehyde, both liquids, combine under certain conditions to make Bakelite, the solid used in place of hard rubber. And some elements combine in different proportions to make different compounds, as hydrogen and oxygen may make either water or hydrogen peroxide. The two sentences that follow are composed of the same words, but the resultant compounds are different.

The cat is on the table.

The table is on the cat.

Even such a word as *on* may completely change its meaning in relation to other words, as we may see in the following examples.

The roof is on the house.

The treat is on the house.

The men are on the committee.

Prices are on the increase.

These slight differences of meaning are evident in the examples, but they must be watched for in less obvious expressions. The phrase "this book of Clarence's" may suggest mere ownership or (mere) authorship, true; perhaps a misunderstanding of such a phrase is not likely to be dangerous. The use of double meanings to make people deliberately understand one thing but to permit the speaker later logically to deny it, however, is most important. Even "do not" can be construed to mean "do," as is demonstrated in many advertisements today. During the era of Prohibition, grape juice was sent out with the directions reading, "Do not allow this to stand; bottle immediately. If these directions are not followed, the contents will ferment." Many an otherwise law-abiding citizen chuckled and stored the keg carefully for weeks before he bottled the "grape juice."

Our readiness to amplify the meanings of statements is of great service to us in ordinary affairs, for we should be forced to speak at length concerning the simplest of things, if this were not so. Consider all the implications of the brief dialogue between a ticket seller and a prospective passenger on a train.

"Two to Duluth."

"Coach?"

"Yes."

"Six-sixty-four."

Expanded only partly, the dialogue means, "I want two tickets that will permit me to ride in a coach of a train owned by this railroad and run between this city and Duluth. I will be willing to give in exchange for those privileges some of the money current in the nation, and I will be willing to leave at that time stated by the railroad in its published bulletin. I shall conduct myself to the coach of the indicated train at the proper time. I will observe all of the regulations . . ." "Words, words, words." Economy and our ability to understand such economies make possible these things. Whenever questions arise concerning all of the implications of such a conversation the courts demand a careful and full description of all of the meanings. Rarely, however, are the railroads forced to defend the bargains they have made in their contracts for transportation. We expect in our daily affairs to be able to take much for granted. We would become impatient if we had to explain in minute detail everything that we did or said. *The New Yorker* magazine includes statements of the obvious in a Fuller Explanations Department. An example of an unnecessary statement is one which appeared in a newspaper recently. "There is being established a school for sailors in Switzerland. They will specialize in sailing."

Our readiness to take things for granted in such situations as that of purchasing tickets for a train trip, however, is a weakness that enables merchants to get us to buy without considering well what or why we buy. By dangling glittering phrases before our eyes and lulling

us into a coma, they make us leap to conclusions that are only implied in the advertisements and not actually stated. The devices are much the same as those that adults use to mislead children into thinking that something has been promised. Since we too often carry over into adulthood our habits as children, we are open to the suave temptations of advertisements for things we do not need. Usually we reproach the advertisers for making extravagant claims. Only rarely can such protest be justified, as those who have carried their protests to court well know. The fault lies in our taking *implied* truths for *actual* truths. The advertisers are much more clever than the young reformer in the story following:

A young and not very wise miss was pointing out to a group of "hillbilly" children the dangers of "red likker." To arouse the interest of the children and to drive her point home, she dropped a worm into a glass of water. Of course, the worm writhed quite healthily there. Then she transferred the worm to a glass of whiskey, where after a few spasmodic movements the worm ceased to move. The young lady paused impressively, and then asked, "Now what lesson does this demonstration teach us?" One bright little lad drawled his answer. "If we don't want to have worms, we should drink plenty of 'corn likker.'"

Had the demonstration been carefully controlled by lulling the children into a trusting mental slumber, as do the advertisers, she would have controlled the children's thinking about what she had to say. Thought raises sales resistance against buying unnecessary articles. Thought

prevents people from jumping to implied, but not stated or logical, conclusions. And this careful thinking is almost entirely a matter of comprehending what words in combination mean. The King, a literal individual, used Alice's tendency to reach conclusions without considering carefully what she had heard. Simple evasions of this sort are common.

The most dangerous form of implying truth is that of stating something that is true and placing it close to something that does not logically follow but seems to. Frequently, an irrelevant statement is quoted from (supposed) authority. The statement is true in itself, but may have been made in connection with something entirely apart from the advertisement. The statement is made without comment. Such implications are common. The "before and after" pictures of advertisements for hair tonics do not claim that the tonic cured the baldness. The statement is simply made that before the tonic was used, the man was bald; after the tonic was used, the man had hair on his head. Doctors know that some forms of baldness or the conditions causing baldness are only temporary. But advertisers skillfully play upon our tendency to arrive at conclusions that please us; they simply give us all of the materials for a faulty conclusion and let us do our worst (or, to the advertisers, our best).

It is significant that law now prevents a claim that a medicine is a *cure*. To get around this, manufacturers and merchants have to imply cures. Advertisements of medicine, however, are not the only examples of specious

reasoning. A seventeenth century coffee "ad" would be laughed at today, but readers are urged to compare the out-and-out claims in that with contemporary *implied* claims. The early handbill stated that coffee prevented and cured the "fumes," sore eyes, dropsy, gout, scurvy, and "consumption." How our advertisers of coffee and cigarettes might like to say as much today! But the cigarette benefits are limited to aiding athletes, ocean fliers, and actresses. Men not wearing garters lose their jobs (as if men wearing them did not!). Women failing to use the right soaps or hand creams either cannot find men to marry them or else lose their husbands when they do marry!

Like the fear we have of social censor if we do not use *the* pronunciation of a word is the fear that we will not be able to live as elegantly as the Jones family. It is implied that unless the housewife can set her table with a certain make of silverware, she will be reduced to tears of humiliation when the "boss" comes to dinner. (The brute! He knows the salaries he pays!!!) Yet if we try to follow the implications of the advertisements, we will be woefully disappointed to find that other considerations, such as physical and mental characteristics that we cannot change, will prevent our achieving what was so rosilily painted for us.

Our problem is that of perceiving *simple sense* and in sorting it out from emotional sense. Compare the sentences that follow.

1. Give me a cigarette.
2. May I have a cigarette?

3. May I try one of your brand of cigarettes?
4. I have no cigarette. (still suggesting the speaker wants one)
5. Are these your cigarettes?
6. Darn, I must have left my cigarettes at home!
7. Let me have one of those tarred ropes you're smoking.
8. I usually smoke any *given* brand, will someone . . . ?

The simple sense is the same for all of these sentences, but other appeals are made at the same time. The courtesy that appears in (2) is missing from (1). The third request carries still other meanings: (a) the speaker wants a cigarette, and (b) he smokes a different brand than those available, and (c) he does not want to offend the giver, and (d) he softens the outright demand, and (e) he wants to expend as little energy as possible to get a cigarette, for he will forego his own brand. The other sentences may be examined in the same fashion.

Not always has a statement *simple sense*, or, at least, the statement's simple sense may be relatively unimportant. "I had a swell time" tells us nothing except that the speaker liked the occasion. If he says it to someone who is in doubt whether to go to a similar affair, he may be trying to get the other person to go. The *simple sense* here is somewhat unimportant, for the emotional content outweighs it. The simple sense of a speech given by a politician is often very little. The weighting comes in the emotional appeal and in the effort to get the listeners to vote for the speaker and against the opponents. Consider the excerpt from such a speech.

We don't want to take the farms away from the farmers. We want the farmers to keep their farms. We want everyone to have a decent amount of clothing. We want everyone to have a decent amount of food. We want everyone to have an opportunity for education. . . .

The high pressures that are brought to bear in money-raising campaigns usually avoid using statements that appeal to simple sense only. They play upon emotions in such a way that, as in the excerpt given above, simple sense is overlooked, yet the statements seem to be otherwise.

In examining passages, we should ask ourselves, What is the simple meaning? What sort of person does this speaker or writer think I am? How important does he really think his idea is? What is he trying to get me to do? If brief and impersonal summaries are made of each of these things, the reader or listener may uncover emptiness rather than solidity in the passage. Not every passage, of course, has the four different meanings suggested. There may be only one or any combination of the four.

The Frosting May Be the Cake

The difficulty that students have in distinguishing slang from formal English is akin to their difficulty in perceiving the difference between figurative and literal speech. Figures of speech are often considered to be only decorations that are not essential to the understanding of ideas. As a matter of fact, a figure of speech often is much clearer than a literal explanation; more,

it often requires much less space in writing than the expository passage would. A student, who was puzzled by such explanations, stopped at the lecturer's desk and said, "I don't see why we're doing all of this. I still think that metaphors are merely decoration. What's the point of it all?"

Why did the student use "see" and "point"? Certainly those two words are used in a figurative sense there! "Decoration" also is figurative. He found these uses of the words to be valuable in making his *point*. A simple and time-honored illustration will make the situation clearer.

Students have learned that a simile is direct comparison and that a metaphor is an implied comparison. These two figures of speech are usually illustrated respectively by two similar sentences.

Simile: The river winds its way across the meadows like a silver ribbon.

Metaphor: The river, a silver ribbon, winds its way across the meadows.

We are not concerned with the distinction to be drawn between simile and metaphor; we are concerned with finding whether the figures of speech are essential to our meaning or whether they are merely decoration. Do they add *meaning*? Let us omit the figure.

The river flows across the meadows.

But that, we can all agree, does not tell the whole story. "Flows" does not convey all that ribbon does, and no hint of color is given. Let us try again.

The narrow, silvery river winds its way across the meadows.

Still something is missing. A ribbon is not only narrow but somewhat fragile. The silk in the ribbon has a sheen that we have not completely suggested. All of the associations of "ribbon" added to the meaning of the first sentences we have used. It would seem that the frosting has become the cake.

Description is not the only form of expression that is definitely aided by figures of speech. Complex ideas may be economically presented. Huxley in trying to make clear what he meant by education resorted to the game of chess as a figure for presenting his idea.

. . . It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chessboard is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. But we also know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated—without haste, but without remorse.

My metaphor will remind some of you of the famous picture in which Retzsch has depicted Satan playing at chess with man for his soul. Substitute for the mocking fiend in that picture a calm, strong angel who is playing for love, as we say, and would rather lose than win—and I should accept it as an image of human life.

The reader of that passage can without difficulty apply Huxley's theory at once, yet Huxley has not actually

described or explained life. The reader, however, knows that to ignore a decaying tooth is to make a mistake in playing this game. Students who forget the rest of the essay, "A Liberal Education," but who remember the comparison can readily explain the main ideas to be found there. Truly, here the frosting is actually the cake. What seems to be mere decoration is really the essence of the idea. And to attempt to express the same ideas in a more literal manner would be to rob the expression of emphasis as well as of clearness.

Some of us may complain that an analogy cannot be made to walk on all fours, that the metaphor breaks down if the application is carried too far. Such a complaint arises from forgetting *how* two things may be compared. The analogy of the game of chess to life makes use of the fact that rules or laws are inherent in both, that punishments of one sort or another follow upon not following the rules, and that only the actual pieces and their movements are seen. The law of gravity, for example, cannot be seen, but a falling rock can be. To say that a player in a game of chess may play when he wishes and a person in life may not and that, therefore, the analogy breaks down is to overlook the portions of the two things that touch. When John Donne compares two lovers to the legs of a drawing compass and says that one stays at home while the other roams and that they both face each other and lean more toward each other the farther one moves away, he is comparing them only in a few qualities, the direction of their thoughts and affections. Forcing a figure of

speech beyond the considerations apparent in it will make it break.

Students may easily test their own figures of speech for preciseness of expression by translating them into less metaphorical language or by stating them in the forms of other metaphors. And the safest use for the student may be that of comparing two *objects* and their uses rather than two ideas or abstractions. Not that he must limit himself to such uses (Huxley's comparison did not, of course) but his comparisons will be surer.

The qualities that are to be compared must be kept firmly in mind or else the comparisons will fall down. For example, it has been argued that students could not possibly learn to write correct sentences until they had learned the parts of a sentence and legislative grammar for "correct" writing because a student could not learn trigonometry until he has studied and learned geometry. The analogy here breaks down because the qualities of the two studies being compared are not carefully considered. Students use their writing while they study grammar; but students do not use trigonometry until they have studied it. The study of grammar does not actually precede the actual writing, for students are writing and speaking correctly in hundreds of ways before they ever take up a formal study of writing. Trigonometry is a new subject; writing is not.

The analogy has much the same form as the mathematical equation.

$$2 : 4 :: 8 : 16$$

Huxley points out in his essay, "The Method of Scientific Investigation," that the methods of a butcher in weighing meats are essentially like those of a chemist in weighing chemicals, but the difference is merely a matter of degree, the chemist's balances being more accurate than those of the butcher's. The analogy might be stated then

	(are to)		(as)		(are to)
The weighings	the weighings	the scales	the balances		
of the	of the	of the	of the		
butcher	: chemist	:: butcher	: chemist.		

Huxley uses the analogy to explain that the methods of the man of science differ from those of the man in the street only by degree, and the analogy goes far to remove the mystery that might surround the workings of the scientist. Such a clear analogy stands in sharp contrast to the muddy analogy concerning the relative positions of grammar to writing and geometry to trigonometry.

Practical Considerations

The very tenuous quality of our subject has driven us far afield, and a student may well protest at this point that he sees clearly that words have meanings in relation to the context in which they appear and also that he is willing to grant that figures of speech are not merely decorations but may be necessary to the explanation or understanding of an idea. But, after all, what is the point?

The point is that students are urged to consider *what*

they have said and whether they *mean what they have said*.

Students who stop to consider the meaning their sentences have, will not leave unrevised sentences like those which follow. They were all taken from students' papers.

1. Lying near a pool of bacon grease on the gray sink she saw a copy of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*.
2. Now, the cow with a push of a button delivers milk more efficiently than was formerly done with man power.
3. Methods of teaching are mostly personal, and are the effective application of an individual of the controlling principle upon which his work is based.
4. Looking on the other plain at the people having completed their high school work and feeling perfectly competent to go onto business may be successful in their trade but what are they doing for the people or the World?
5. Boxing has changed from a slow awkward style to a fast skillful style.
6. The next moment the plane was elevated with the wings perpendicular to the surface and if it wouldn't have been for the strap hold me in I would of fallen out.

Such sentences as these were not written by students who were hopelessly poor. Once they understood that they must examine their sentences carefully to see what they said, they produced no more like those quoted.

More subtle errors (like the one noted above in using "nice about") are not so easily corrected, but students who cease to skim through their papers and who stop to consider thoughtfully what they have written have

little difficulty in seeing for themselves how simple phrases may be misread. One simple way of testing a sentence that may have a doubtful meaning is that of translating it word for word into other words, keeping the ideas equivalent. The sentence that is here translated is very simple but it shows the method.

The birds sing.

Translation: The sparrows chatter.

The translation obviously has only partly succeeded in translating the first sentence, for though "sparrows" is equivalent to "birds," "chatter" has omitted the suggestion of music that is conveyed by "sing." Better, the sentence might be translated to

The canaries warble.

As was mentioned earlier, metaphors may be tested in much the same way. The student might try translating the following into other metaphors.

Time and tide wait for no man.

The rolling stone gathers no moss.

A stitch in time saves nine.

A further exercise might be to translate these metaphors into less figurative language, for example: Sewing up a run in a stocking when it is only a quarter of an inch long will prevent a longer run that may not be repaired, or may be repaired only by many difficult stitches.

Further practical considerations suggest that the student might apply these suggestions concerning meaning to his reading as well as to his writing. If he will form

the habit of summarizing the simple sense of essays, plays, poems, and stories, he will find that often philosophical ideas are presented without labels. The story that he read may have aroused him emotionally and presented him with the kernel of communism without his being aware of it. If he had a clear summary (a definition) of communism in his mind, he would be able to compare his summary of the simple sense and identify it.

The student who is able to examine an object or an idea impersonally is the student who will maintain a balanced outlook upon life. The impersonal point of view searches for simple sense and sorts it out from emotional senses or meanings. He will not discard his emotional reactions, of course, but he will give them only their due. He will want specific information. He will not be content to know that a germicide kills thousands of germs; he will want to know what germs, for many germs are killed simply by exposure to air or to the heat of the hand. He will be wary of all dogmatic pronouncements (even this one) in the newspapers, speeches, class lectures, or text-books until he has thoroughly examined and tested them to his best ability. When students are urged to *think*, many of them screw up their foreheads into wrinkles and let it go at that. The materials of this chapter and of other chapters (such as that which discusses research papers) describe some methods of thinking. There is no *right* answer, but there are answers that are more acceptable than others.

As a final exercise, the following is offered. Just

what meaning and how much meaning can be found in this?

Truth comes more quickly out of error than confusion.

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CHAPTER V

GRAPHIC METHODS FOR ILLUSTRATING WRITING

No matter what an informal discussion may be concerned with, one of the speakers is very likely to say at some point in it, "Hand me a pencil and paper, and I'll show you what I mean." Occasionally this book has followed the tendencies of lecturers and has made use of charts and tables to make clearer the points under discussion. The use of charts is not limited to the presentation of concrete things but may be applied to less tangible ideas. It is not unusual to find in an article explaining the structure of a corporation, a public utility, or a department of government, a chart consisting mostly of squares or circles representing the various divisions of the organization, and of lines connecting the squares to show how the divisions are related. In even as profound a subject as logic, circles are drawn to show the overlapping or exclusion of ideas. Very few subjects that we can think of are not made clearer by the use of drawings, charts, graphs, tables, or photographs.

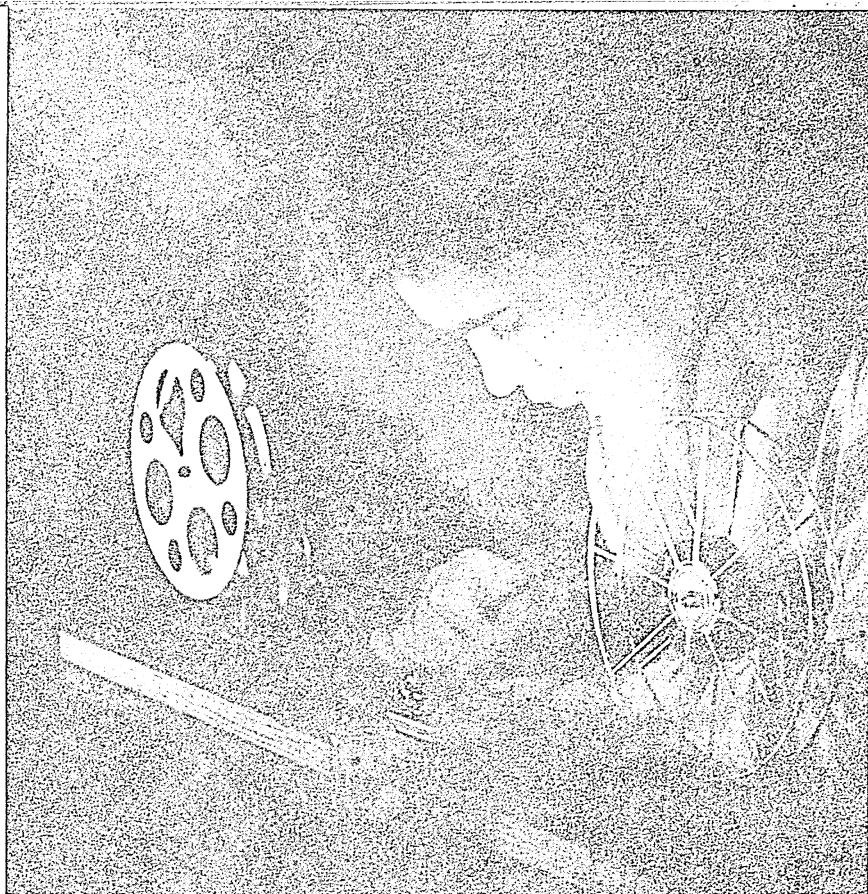
Since this is true, it is strange that more student writers do not accompany their papers with graphic illustrations. Even if the additional value lies in increased interest alone, the increment is worth attaining.

The writer who is a camera enthusiast will welcome some of these suggestions. The writer who has a talent for drawing may realize that he has overlooked many opportunities for using his gift. The writer with a mathematical turn of mind, who cannot skip any of the fascinating graphs in *Fortune*, will realize that his interest can pay him dividends if he will use graphs in his own papers. Those who plan to enter advertising as a profession need not be told, of course, of the importance of illustrations in "copy."

The examples that are given in this chapter are to be considered merely as suggestions, for the use to which illustrative material can be put is almost limitless. But none of the suggestions must be taken to mean that *any* picture will add to the clarity or interest of a poorly written paper, or, for that matter, of a good one. Illustrations must be as carefully selected for the paper as would be any specific detail or example. In this connection, it is to be observed that if a writer has an idea so clearly in mind that he can draw a picture of it, he is likely to have little difficulty in reproducing the idea in words. If, likewise, he can select a photograph that will represent precisely what he wants to say, then he can feel somewhat assured that he has a definite idea to express in writing.

Photographs

Photographs may first be considered as specific examples or instances. A paper discussing the recent growth in the use of trailers should, surely, have many photo-



SPLICING AMATEUR MOVIE FILM

You are sometimes asked by your teachers to write a theme about a process. This picture shows how a photograph of such a process as splicing amateur movie film, whether the photo be actual or in your own mind, can give you sharp, clear details for your theme. Note the different reels, the position of the hand with the scraping and cutting tool, the bottle of splicing glue, the interest and intensity expressed in the boy's face.



HOIST AWAY

Sometimes in very simple pictures there is much stimulus to writing. Sometimes they represent social and economic problems. The one above, for example, shows an English stevedore loading American flour onto a Swedish boat at the docks of Quebec. Starting with that we might write an interesting theme on the dependence of the nations of the world upon one another.

graphs of many different types of trailers for automobiles. A second value in photographs may be merely that of adding to the interest. Stories of camping trips would profit much from the inclusion of photographs of scenes at or near camp. Accounts of the "big game" would be enhanced by snapshots of the game or of some of the players. (Sports writers know this!) And so on to the end of time: papers on political questions, school affairs, home life, hobbies, conditions in settlement houses, book bindings, automobiles, people, wars, strikes, labor, housing conditions, parks, historical characters, movie actors, the movie industry, photography—all might use to good advantage photographs that illustrate what is discussed in the papers.

The photographs may be glued to the sheet or placed on separate and suitable sheets or mountings. If the article which they accompany is of some permanent value, then perhaps the photographs should be printed in the first place upon sensitized paper backed with linen or canvas.

Not to be despised (except perhaps by the camera enthusiast) is the use of blueprint paper for reproducing, inexpensively, pictures from old negatives, drawings, or even the veining of leaves for a paper on some botanical subject. The paper is inexpensive and requires only sunlight for exposure and water for developing. The directions for using it are simple and can be obtained from the stationery store when the purchase is made. Papers with such illustrations have much to recommend

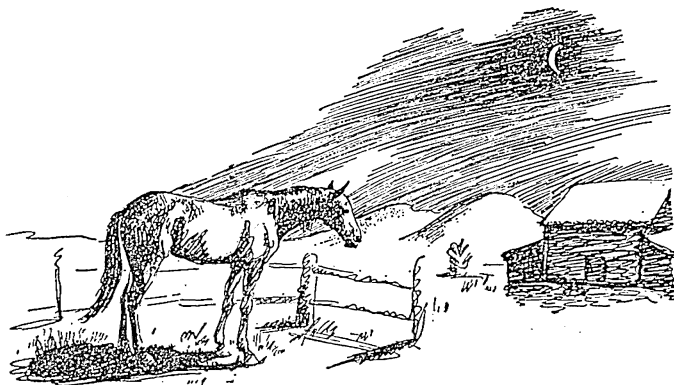
them from the point of view of the resultant clearness and interest they produce.

Since blueprints are not readily reproduced for purposes of publication in books, no illustrations are given here. The actual photographs that are reproduced below are placed here mostly to remind you how interesting such illustrations can be.

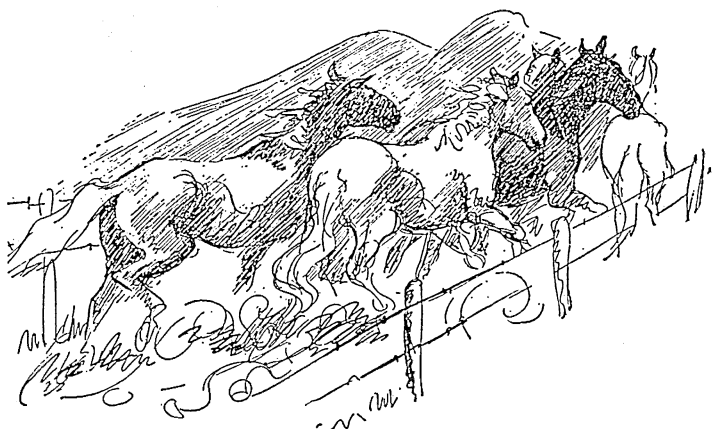
Drawings

Drawings may be either somewhat artistic expressions principally to add interest or machine drawings or line drawings for clearness. Under the last type are those simple line drawings that are printed on instruction sheets for new kinds of can openers, steam cookers, or automatic pencils, the drawings being accompanied by a minimum of written explanation.

A few of the more artistic illustrations that have been lifted bodily from student papers are presented below. The pen and ink illustrations were from a narrative, *Our Trip to Twin Butte Ranch*, and were, as you will see, deftly tied into the story; no titles were, therefore, necessary.

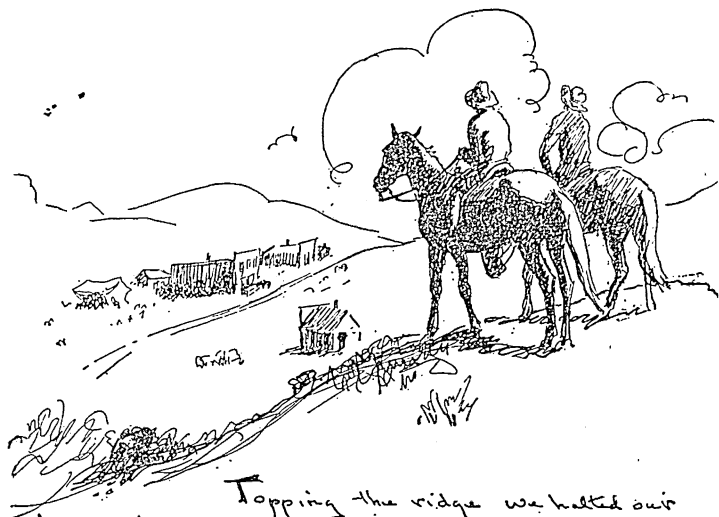


Dime — dreaming and dozing
in the white moonlight with the Twin
Buttes humped in the pearly distance behind the
green and purple shadows of the stable — mystery and
a scented cool stillness. Such was our introduction
to this horse destined to win our hearts so completely
that in after-year-remembrance his memory gives
our hearts a twinge of loss and worship. There was
a certain equine sweetness and playfulness about
Dime which coupled with style, speed and genuine
worthiness caused even the casual horse-lover to
exclaim: "There's something different about Dime!"
Dark bay in color with a tiny fleck of white in his
wide-spaced forehead — soft honest brown eyes; pointed
ears; nostrils in tendril scroll that flared and curled
at the prospect of a gallop; perfectly shaped legs and
well-placed hoofs. Dime was unmistakably a
thoroughbred and a past record of endurance and
stamina proved him one!



We awoke next-morning to the sound of the clattering hoofs — sprang out of bed and to the window sunshine, washed in dew ... blue sky and pink hills ... horses ... tossing heads and the trample and thud of clumsy hoofs — thundering along the alley to the stable and harness —

"There's Murphy, the one with the Roman nose ... Bill's the white one — Daisy clumsy and awkward" and Dora turned to the other window "ah here comes 'Wrangler Skree' — he had to shut the pasture gate!" Dime cantered by in such spirited style that we gasped in admiration: "oh! what a beauty of a horse — just the type I like!"



Topping the ridge we halted our horses to look about us; Miles and miles of undulating country blending from varied shades of green to vapory blue and mauve. Old Emerson in the valley below — brooding in the sun. We visualized its past glory with the stir of life ... the hotels ... saloons ... gamblers. The rattle and rumble of stage coach and the cumbersome four-horse-freighters hauling supplies from Dickinson. Ted was 'freighting teamster' one winter — he said there were days of bitter cold when a swig of whiskey felt pretty good. We rode our horses down a steep trail strewn with pebbles, as we were off the main road, and cantered up the 'street' of Emerson town. The ramshackle buildings stared at us in lonesome retrospection as the sun warmed its warped and seamy walls; the foulness of the gaping doors and windows; an old shed twisted in agony in an effort not to fall into a growth of nettles flourishing in the midst of decay. ...

The Son Makes an Angelfood Cake

"Please, Mom, won't you bake an angelfood cake for me?"

"I would, son, but I really don't know how; why, I've never baked one in my life!"

"Aw, you do too know how,—won'tcha please?"

"I tell you, I don't know how and that's final!"

"Okay, then. I'll make one myself."

Mother smiled as she walked into the front room and left me alone with my baking ideas. I became determined that my angelfood would be in truth food for the angels and with that do-or-die attitude started looking through cookbooks. At last I found a recipe that appeared to be sufficiently simple, and my career as a cook began.

The whites of eight eggs were devilish hard to separate from the yokes, and the two yellow globules I did break nearly ruined my perfect start. Next, those whites had to be beaten up stiff. I beat those poor undeveloped chickens until my fingers, arms, and head ached. Mother heard the loud groan I emitted as I dropped the eggbeater in order to rest my numb fingers and came into the kitchen to determine its cause.

"Well," she exclaimed, "I see you've got the eggs about half beaten. You're coming . . ."

"Huh! What do you mean half beaten? I've given those eggs all the beating they're going to get. What in the world do you think I am, an iron man? Why, I expect my arm to drop off any minute now!"

"Well, do as you wish. It's your cake."

With this she went back to her morning paper. I sat down and rubbed my poor arm and began to realize that cake making wasn't as easy as that recipe book portrayed it to be. I finally decided that for the good of my cake, oh yes, it was still going to be the best ever made, I would beat that white froth for just five minutes more. Four minutes and twenty-two seconds later I stopped beating. Cake or no cake, I

wanted to be able to use my arm afterwards. Another look at the cookbook and I began shouting, "Hey, Mom, have you got any cream of tartar?"

"Yes," she replied; "it's in the cupboard in a box like the one the cinnamon comes in."

"All right, I'll get it," I replied as I began to remove the many small containers which held everything but the desired tartar. Of course, the last box would be it. As I started to put the containers back into the cupboard I spilled the nutmeg and the allspice all over the rugs and the floor. After cleaning up the mess, I finally leveled out a teaspoon of the tartar sauce and mixed it in with the sugar and egg whites. The directions said to fold it in, but I couldn't find anything stable enough to stand bending. I rounded up the few other ingredients and stirred them into what ended up in a thick creamy mass.

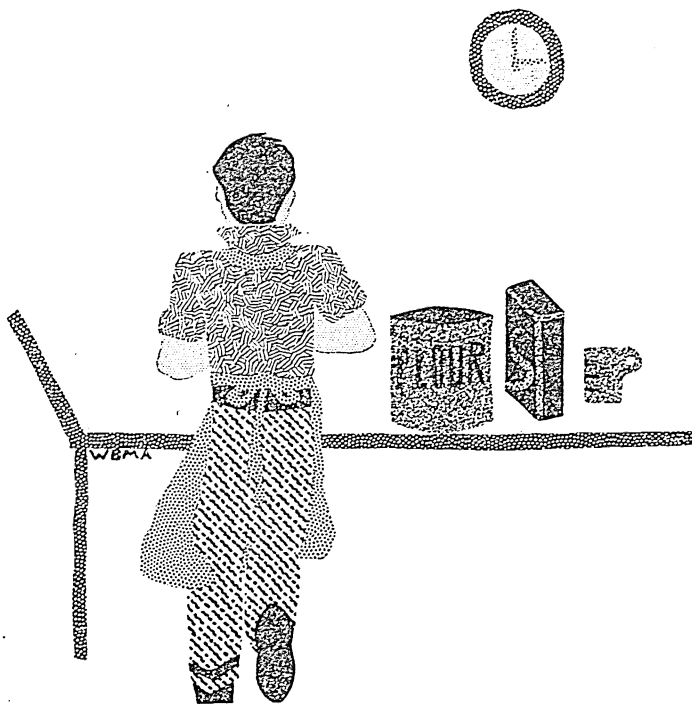
"Oh, Mom, where's the pan? It's the one with the funnel on it, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's the one. It's in that lower cupboard."

I had to remove half the pans before I finally found my angelfood tin. Of course I set the pans back in such a manner that they would all fall out as soon as anyone opened the door, but that was the least of my worries.

The cookbook said nothing about greasing the tin, but I did it just to be on the safe side. After the thick mess had been poured into the pan, I put it into the hot oven. To be sure it didn't burn, I set the alarm on the electric clock and lay down on the davenport to recuperate. Forty minutes later the loud buzz of the clock aroused me from my cat nap. I took my prize cake from the oven and marveled at the way it had risen. It was a good eight inches high—and was it fluffy! Gee, it was the most beautiful cake I had ever seen! It just made your mouth water to look at it. I set it on the stove top to cool as I went into the front room to look at the funnies.

A bit later I proudly ushered my mother into the kitchen to show her what a real cook could do. As I reached for a knife I heard Mother laugh softly. I turned and gazed at my product, and I gasped as I saw that my cake had fallen.



I had to blink my eyes to see if it was true. There was my cake, barely three inches high and looking like soft cement. In desperation I cut a piece and tasted of it. It was as tough as rope, and it didn't taste much better. My cake and my career were both ruined, so I grabbed the cookbook to see what I hadn't done. Yes—there it was as big as life, "Turn the cake upside down immediately upon taking it from the oven in order to prevent its falling."



P O R T R A I T O F A G E N T L E M A N

Much writing has been done on animals, not baby ones, but grownups. These have ranged from sentimental essays about "man's best friend" and thrilling rescues by St. Bernards of exhausted and dying mountaineers, to stories about a "Bob Son of Battle," a mongoose, and even, in the verses of don marquis, an alley cat and a cockroach. In the above picture the photographer has caught a noble dog, one obviously "a gentleman," of power and dignity, a friend of human beings, a protector of his "family."



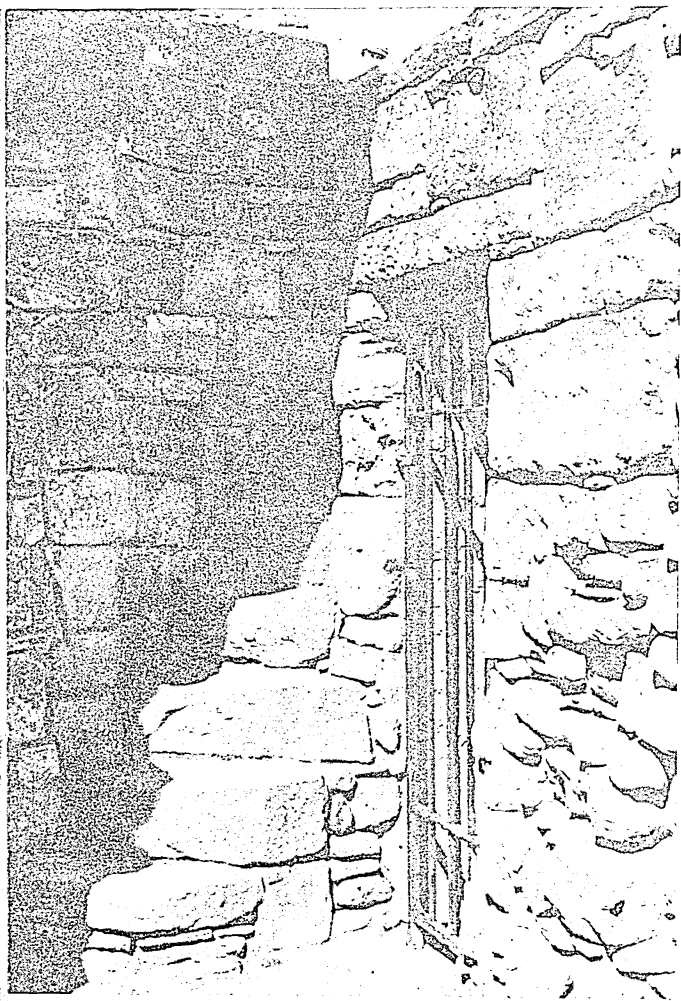
APPLE - EATER

Among the few subjects that have universal appeal in writing or pictures, babies, whether they be human or animal such as kittens, puppies, or "piglets" rank first. The above photograph illustrates this appeal. Again the details are all there in the photograph for the writer to translate into words. The black warm sweater, the softness and amazing flexibility of baby hands revealed by the position of the fingers and rolling of the skin on the hand, the twinkle in the eyes, the tousled hair with its quaint braids and funny little white bows, topped by the beret cocked with abandon on the back of her head.



H A N D - S T A N D

Many of you like to write, and most of you are occasionally asked to write descriptions of action. Again, such writing is crisp and vivid if you *see* it photographically. In the above picture notice how, studying it, it would be easy for you to describe the action, the position of the hands, the tensing of the arm muscles, the curve of the back, the position of the feet. Note the unusual detail of a strand of hair caught just as it is falling into her eyes. The description would gain interest if you knew, as the man with the camera did, that the young woman is a physical education instructor at Istanbul, Turkey, in the American college for women, and that in this picture she was amusing her six-year-old niece.

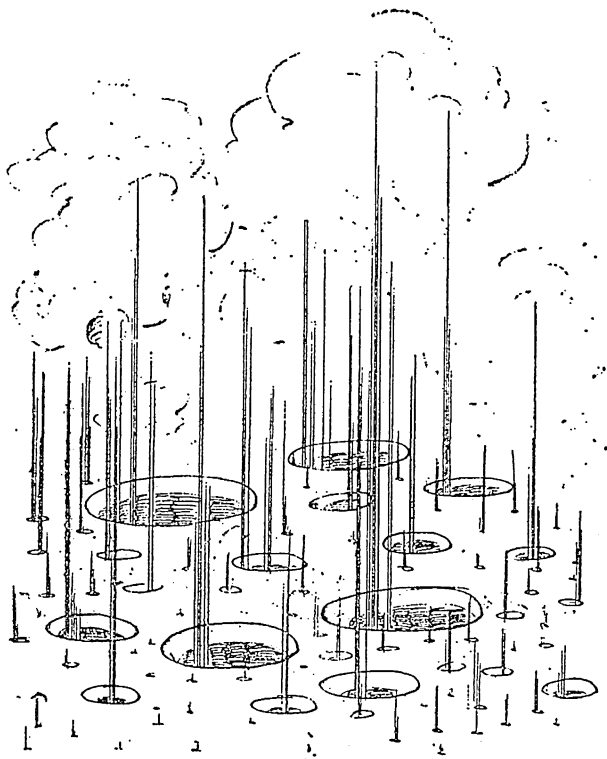


BOTTLE DUNGEON

At first glimpse this picture seems to represent little but a section of ruins of some sort of stone building. But such things are the source of much of the writings of Stevenson, Scott and other writers. It is a section of the ruined wall of the castle at St. Andrews, Scotland. Built in the 13th Century, the great stones you see were hand hewn by the brawny, fierce, kilted Scots masons. They were put together by a mortar made by clan women who gathered sea shells, burned them for the lime. The iron gate leads to the neck of a great dungeon, dug out of solid rock, shaped like a bottle through the neck of which prisoners were dropped to the floor below. Figure out, if you can, how anyone could escape, and note the Scotch efficiency of the device since only one armed guard was needed to watch up to a hundred prisoners.

Dissecting a Football Player's Head

As I was watching a football game one day, I was very much surprised to see a round object rolling toward me. As



“THE AIR RUSHED IN WITH A HOLLOW BOOM.”

it stopped near me I was amazed to hear it say, “What down, ref?”

Upon looking further out on the field, I saw a headless player lying on the ground. He apparently didn't miss his head, because he got up and walked to his position very non-chalantly.

Desiring to get the inside "dope" on a football player's head, I picked up the hard mass and took it to a blacksmith's shop. After great difficulty and using a large amount of heat we finally cracked the outer shell, which was composed of steel. The air rushed in with a hollow boom as the inside was a vacuum. Floating around in a small secluded corner were such phrases as, "Take your man," "What's the gain?" "Where were you on that play?" and "Stay on your feet." A large assortment of numbers was also found, apparently in great confusion. There was the makings of a brain, but in the place of wrinkles a goodly number of cleat marks were on it. Very little else was found.

I am told that this player hasn't yet discovered his loss. I assume he used his head so little he doesn't miss it.

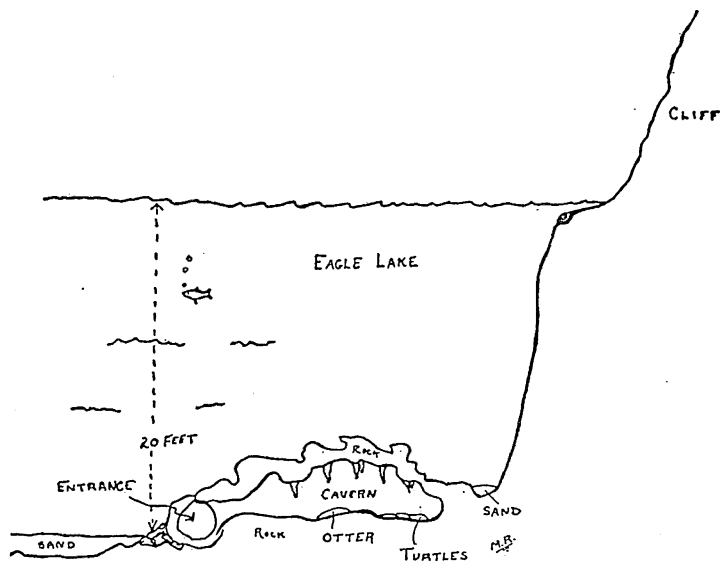
Besides adding interest to a paper, drawings frequently contribute to the clearness of expression. The drawing that accompanies the narrative of the actual discovery of a cavern at the bottom of a lake—an experience modestly termed *An Incident* by the student explorer—adds much even to his clear writing.

An Incident

I dove off the anchored rowboat. Down and down I went in the icy, green water. The water was a greenish blue, which formed a striking contrast with the cold whiteness of the sand. Ahead of me I could dimly see the black opening of the cave. As I swam closer I could see that the tunnel slanted upward. I went through the opening and swam slowly forward and upwards. I was almost out of breath. By pulling myself, with my hands grasping the rocky walls, I finally "broke water." I could not see a thing for a few minutes until my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness. Shivering from what I thought was excitement I slowly crept out of the water into

a large cavern. I put one foot out of water on the sand—bam!—and I fell flat on my face back into the water. It was not sand! It was *ice*! No wonder that I was shivering! Cautiously, I picked my barefooted way up the icy incline.

As I had by now fully emerged from the warmer water, I knew that I was really *cold*—that I was in a natural ice box.



And why shouldn't it be cold twenty feet under the surface of Lake Eagle and under a rocky ceiling that must be measured, surely, in yards, not feet and inches! The cave was perfectly insulated from old man Sun. I glanced around in the dim light that seemed to be reflected into the underwater cavern through the watery entrance and saw what looked like washtubs and a log. Making my way gingerly to the other side of the cavern I found that the washtubs were huge turtles, and the log an otter of immense size—all frozen perfectly solid. They had probably "holed up" in the cavern for the winter and gone to sleep. The refrigerator did the rest.

The ceiling must have been about eight feet high, for I could just touch it by standing on my toes. As there was always moisture seeping in from the twenty feet of water above, small icicles had formed; after constant droppings and freezings, huge stalactites had emerged. The cavern was about ten feet wide and twenty-five feet long. I thought, "What a tremendous upheaval of this lake bottom took place to form this!" In the few minutes that I had been in this underwater cave I had noticed the staleness of the air. Trying to figure it out I examined the cave again and finally arrived at the conclusion that whenever the cave had been formed—no matter how long ago—this was the same original air.

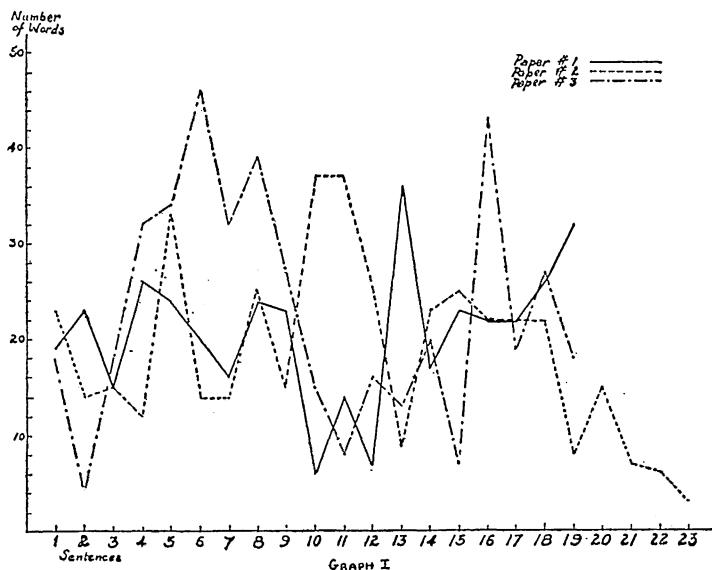
By now I was completely chilled; so bidding Mother Nature's ice box "Good-by," I entered the "warm" water, swam down the tunnel and back to the surface of the lake.

Graphs

Graphs, like any facts, need interpretation. It is not enough that a graph be included in a paper; the writer must not leave the reader to draw his own conclusions. Since graphs usually present more than single facts, the writer should point out those facts and conclusions that are pertinent to his own discussion. The first of the three graphs that are presented here will be discussed in some detail; the others are presented merely to show their forms. None of the complicated treatments of graphs statistically will be considered, for advanced statistics is a subject beyond the scope of this book.

Graphs must be kept as simple as possible, and the form of them used should be selected in terms of the data that are the bases for the graphs. If, for example, the material of the line graph were used for drawing a

circle graph, only a meaningless, complex graph would result. Just as we write sentences and paragraphs to break up complex ideas into small, easily digested bits, so we draw graphs to bring together many facts and



ideas into a space small enough for them to be easily comprehended.

Graph I was provoked by a discussion of variation in sentence length. An instructor had pointed out to his class that the sentences of mature and excellent writers varied in length from one to about one hundred words, with an average of between thirty and fifty words to a sentence. It was decided to make a comparison of some students' papers by counting the number of words in each sentence in each paper. Three of those actually

examined appear in Chapter VI as illustrations: Paper #1 is *Sheep and My Case of Insomnia*, Paper #2 is *Dear Miss X*, and Paper #3 is the first section of the *Autobiography*. When the sentences of each had been numbered consecutively and the number of words in each sentence listed in a table, it was difficult to come to many conclusions, for the comparisons could not easily be made by that method. The graph, however, showed clearly the alternation of short with long sentences, and the comparative number of very short and somewhat long sentences.

It is to be noticed that the average number of words per sentence is approximately twenty for all of the papers, and that the longest sentence is close to forty words. Paper #3 groups long sentences and short sentences, but Papers #1 and #2 go from short to long, short to long. These papers do stand in sharp contrast to some of the papers that were analyzed, for a few of the others that were built up of childish, short sentences varied in length only from about ten words to twenty words, with an average of fourteen words. Such a limited variation makes a paper somewhat monotonous, and the writer should make some effort to vary his sentence length.

Sometimes the data may be more clearly presented by means of other forms of graphs. The bar or circle graphs make comparisons convenient when only a few items make up the data; they would not be as usable for making the sort of comparisons that were possible in the line graph just given.

Using the same student papers as were used for Graph I, the class made a study of the relative number of words in each paragraph of each paper. The results are given in the bar graph, Graph II. The tendencies of the individual writers to long or short paragraphs is obvious at a glance.

Wherever possible, you should, as a general rule, use

PAPER #1	¶ 1 - 190 wds.		¶ 2 - 173 wds.		¶ 3 32 wds.		
PAPER #2	¶ 1 64 wds.	¶ 2 61 wds.	¶ 3 - 139 wds.		¶ 4 79 wds.	¶ 5 83 wds.	¶ 6 27 wds.
PAPER #3	¶ 1 - 152 wds.		¶ 2 - 113 wds.		¶ 3 - 173 wds.		

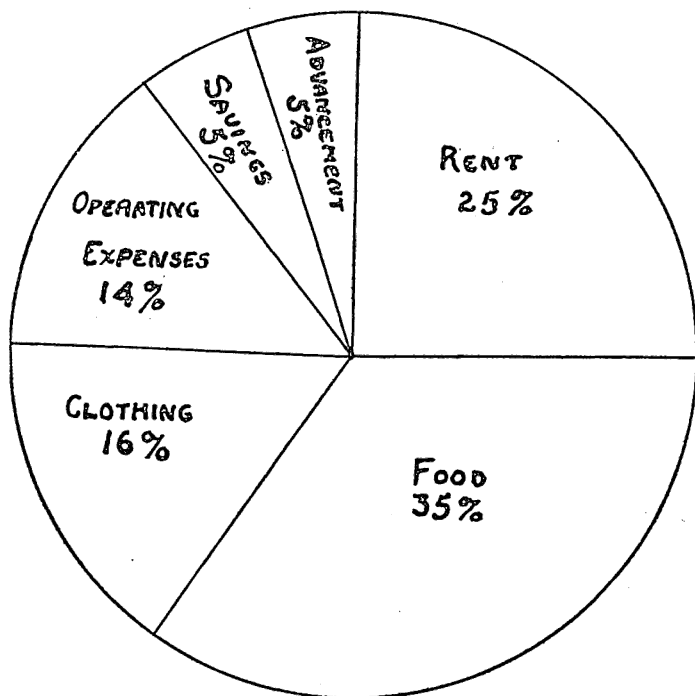
GRAPH II
A COMPARISON OF PARAGRAPHS

graphs rather than tables. Though tables contain the same basic information as graphs drawn from them, relationships existing between the items are not as easily seen and understood. This may be seen from a comparison of the table and circle graph shown on page 156. The method for drawing the circle graph is simple enough: since there are 360 degrees in a circle, each percentage may be represented by the proper number of degrees, e.g., 25% would be represented by 90 degrees on the circumference of the circle, 10% by 36 degrees, and so forth.

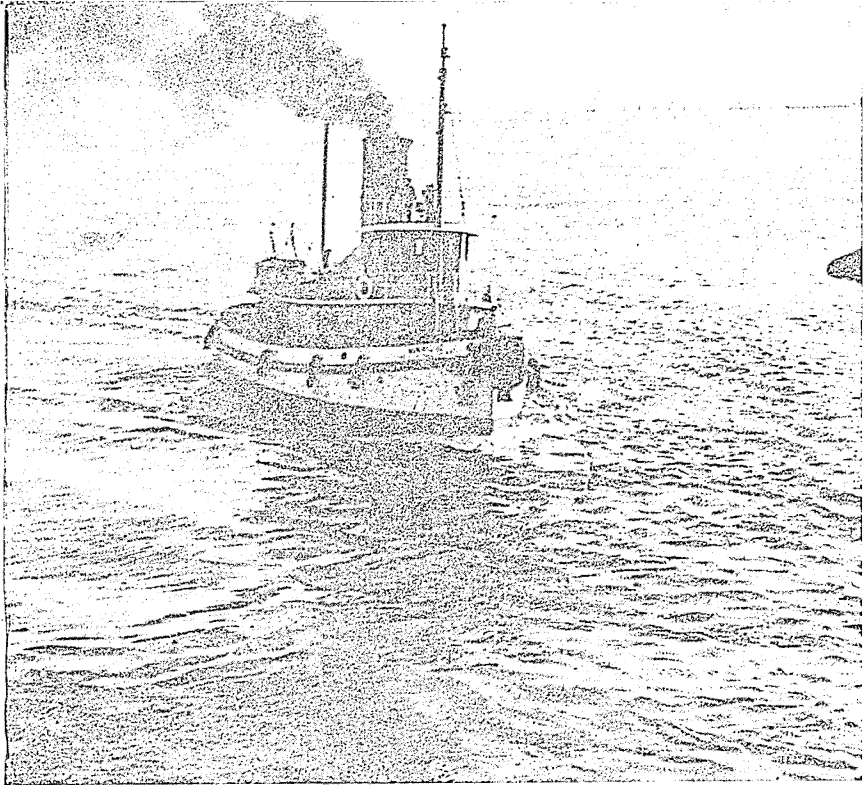
On the basis of your own budget you might make both a table and a circle graph to accompany a paper

*Table Showing the Distribution
of Family Income*

	PER CENT
Advancement	5
Savings	5
Operating Expenses	14
Clothing	16
Rent	25
Food	35



GRAPH III
DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY INCOME ~



READY TO DOCK

You are sometimes asked to prepare a paper on your travels. Again the photograph, on paper or in the mind's eye, gives you striking detail and adds interest. Note in the above the hills and bridge in the distance, the oily water of the harbor, the steel rails of the great liner with her engines stopped, and the blunt-nosed, powerful little tug puffing up to butt and pull the big ship to the dock.



MY VACATION

A very common theme assignment in the fall is "My Vacation." Note how the above picture in the mind's eye or on a film contributes detail. The student in the picture is driving an outboard motor. By the expression on his face it is obvious that his fishing has been successful and that a stout string of bass and pickerel are stowed under his feet still flopping.

discussing the difficulties you have to "make both ends meet."

Or, if you are one of the many students who have an exaggerated notion of the income you may expect after you have left school, you might draw a circle graph from the data given in the following table, which gives the distribution of national income for a year not so long past.

Distribution of National Income

PART OF THE POPULATION PER CENT	MINIMUM INCOME
1	\$8,000
5	3,300
10	2,400
20	1,800
67	Less than \$1,400

Can you write a paper summarizing your circle graph?

Miscellaneous Illustrations

Though some of the following illustrations are not properly graphic, they are mentioned here as suggestions that might be overlooked.

Papers discussing the structure of a piece of music or its interpretations might be accompanied by drawings of bars of music. Not all readers, of course, can understand them, but the addition of such illustrations will permit those who do to check the accuracy of the discussion. William Vaughn Moody, in a letter to a musical friend, quotes a few notes to show how a French peasant

chanted "*Pourquoi? Pourquoi?*", with palms spread to the sky.

The use of direct quotations of passages of prose or poetry should not require mention here, but because many students fail to insert quotations of the sort in their discussions of pieces of literature, they must be reminded of the need for such illustration. The previous admonitions to keep "for example," or its equivalent, on the tip of your tongue and your pen are just as important here. If you believe a poet's use of imagery to be superb, quote a few lines of poetry to show what you mean. Others may not be as familiar with the poet as you are, or they may not at the moment be able to recall specific lines.

With only a very little ingenuity all of us can illustrate our papers purposefully.

CHAPTER VI

COMBINING OUR METHODS

The first three chapters presented techniques for writing types that might serve as parts of articles but that only infrequently might be complete in themselves. Combining the different parts is not a process like fitting a jig-saw puzzle together, unless it be that we construct our own puzzle. The parts of such a puzzle fit together once you have matched the various curves; the curves of our parts of a composition do not fit together at once. We have to cut, file, and polish them until they fit smoothly—the more precise the fit, the better our composition.

Before us, then, in this chapter are discussions of the various means by which we make writing serve many purposes. A letter to a friend may make use of description almost entirely, if the writer wishes to picture his new home and surroundings; the letter may be composed mostly of ideas, if the writer is excited about a forthcoming city election; or it may include bits of poetry, if the writer finds that the swing and imagery of poetry best fit his mood. An article for a technical journal may be almost nothing but a series of charts and graphs. The purpose for which the paper is written determines what parts we shall use and how we shall fit them together. In the main, the methods for select-

ing our parts are like those used in Chart B and Chart A in Chapter II: We set up certain pigeonholes and determine from the labels on them what properly goes in them.

We select our clothes according to the activities in which we shall engage. Sports clothes naturally are not worn to a formal dance; dinner jackets or gowns are not worn at golf. We select the details of the general terms "sports clothes" in the same manner that we selected sports clothes for the activity. Does this stiff, wing collar go with the tweeds? No! Do these sport anklets go with the silk evening dress? No!

A larger activity, such as a long journey, demands that we consider many smaller activities as a part of it. We select our articles in terms of everything we expect to do on that trip. Will there be formal dinners? Yes. So we lay out our formal clothes. Will there be fishing? No. We put aside the fishing tackle and hip boots. Will there be golfing? Yes. And so forth. But we have to count our money, arrange our itinerary, pack our things so that we may find them easily, and arrange the almost countless details that arise. In many ways, writing an extended paper is like preparing for and actually taking a trip. If we start out without all of our materials at hand and without the limits of the paper definitely in mind, our impatience at having to get the things as the need arises often conspires to make us leave out important ideas and do a shoddy piece of work. "I can't get the book I want from the library!" often is given as an excuse for not writing a paper or for leaving out vital

material from one written, but unfortunately the paper that depends on "*the book*" usually has little to commend it anyway. For writing has definitely one advantage over the difficulties caused by missing articles on a trip. Few of us having a trip planned to include London, Paris, Rome, Cairo, Tokio and San Francisco could go first to Rome, then return home, then to Paris and back home, and then to Tokio, etc. If we have a careful plan for our paper, however, we can write the third section, say (to change the figure), much as the stone exterior of the fourth floor of a building is applied before that of the first floor. Or, to use a more homely example, we can have our car greased while we are waiting to have a tire repaired. That is to say, we need not wait to write later sections until we have finished the first parts. If we cannot obtain the books or materials for part one we can get the materials for later sections.

It is true that *what we say* is far more important than *how we say it*, and sometimes very poorly written papers are enthusiastically received because they contain material of vast importance and because they show the results of exceedingly hard and intelligent work. Human pride and human ability being what they are, dependence upon such qualities is, however, rarely worth the risk, even for the most conceited or able of us. We have to rely on both our material and our manner of presentation. A good working plan is, therefore, essential to our success. Because some methods of planning papers in general were given in Chapter III, no further discussion will be given here.

Specific examples will be discussed under each of the various types of papers. The kind of language in keeping with the tone of each type will also be considered separately.

Introductions

An examination of articles in current magazines will reveal that "introductions" are almost entirely dispensed with, at least introductions as usually understood by the student. Most introductions in students' papers seem to be written with the break-the-news-gently-to-mother intention. *Plunge directly into the subject!* Narratives of fishing or hunting trips often begin with a long explanation of how the writer talked over the trip with his friends, sorted out his equipment, filled the car with gas and oil, set the alarm clock, awoke in a cold dark dawn, collected his friends, repaired punctures or bought gasoline on the way, sought out a cabin, had dinner that night, and turned in for a fitful sleep. After pages of this sort of thing, the writer finally describes in about two paragraphs the actual fishing! Most of the preliminaries would have served as well for either a hunting or a fishing trip. Indeed, if the same writer does write of another trip, he "introduces" the trip the same way. In much the same fashion does he write his paper for his course in history. He starts to tell why he had to write on the subject, how he became interested in it, and what pains he took to follow the directions. He may even apologize for not having had enough time to do the job.

thoroughly and hope that the instructor will be lenient. *All such "introductions" had best be omitted.*

The *body* of the paper should be the first concern of the writer.

The *conclusion* of a paper is often confused with *ending*. To *end* a paper, simply stop writing when you have said all that you have to say, but *conclusion* might better have another meaning than *end*. For example, if your reading in sociology makes you feel that the Federal government should be actively concerned with housing problems in cities, then that would be your *conclusion* for a paper on that general subject. The effective conclusion sums up those ideas you have arrived at in your study.

Papers for Self-Expression

The first paper of considerable length for a student to try need not entail a great deal of work in gathering materials; in fact it is desirable that he be able to devote most of his time to arranging what he has and to writing the paper. Because a student has within his own mind all of the details for writing a simple autobiographical sketch, he can readily make use of the methods suggested in general for a long paper by attempting to write on the materials of his own life. To avoid telling every little detail of his life, and to give point to his paper, he should write a thesis first that includes each division of his autobiography, and select only those incidents that contribute to the thesis, just as for any paper. The incidents need not be exciting,

for the interest lies less in such incidents than in the fact that they have happened to one person and have colored the course of his life. The autobiography that is used here as an example was written by a student, but for obvious reasons all marks of identity have been removed.

The Autobiography of a Student

I

At my birth, my father said, "She's not worth weighing!" and refused to do any more about me. That was my beginning. Because I was a delicate wee child, I was more sheltered and more alone than the average baby. When my sisters, a few years older than I, trudged off to kindergarten and later to school, I was forced to remain at home because my eyes could not stand much strain. As at first man by necessity learned to devise implements, so a child, if forced to depend on itself for amusement, will create in its mind many things it otherwise would not think of. As days went by and my mind developed, I had time to figure out in my own way the whys and wherefores that bother children, and ever aided by a sympathetic mother built up a world of my own that took the place of young companions.

When my imagination was stretched to the limit for something to do, and I was weary of pondering, I would seek my grandfather's room and gain permission to stand by his desk. I remember the great fascination I had for his paint box, and the insatiable desire to squeeze the neat little tubes, laid row upon row, to watch the red, green, yellow, and blue "worms" ooze out upon the palette. My grandfather, like his mother, was a painter, and he used to take me for long walks and point out the beauties of nature and living things. We used to attend fairs together and go to see art exhibits of many kinds.

My mother always surrounded our lives with beauty. Our backyard was a riot of sweet peas, pansies, bleeding hearts, and every beautiful, oldfashioned flower. How I used to love working in the garden plots beside my mother! When I think of it now, I recall the many ways in which she kept me in the open air. At bedtime mother always told or read us stories. Among others, there was a big set which we children called "The Green Books," though I believe they had a much more intellectual name, and which contained tales, stories from history, games, and objects of art, and were a seemingly never-ending treasure store. I never wearied of hearing tales and would lie in bed for hours after remembering and enlarging upon them. Much as my mother played with me, I had many lonely hours and used these for making stories of my own and in inventing solitary little games. Mother always encouraged me in my imaginings and assured me that my efforts were leading me to fame.

II

My first efforts at drawing grew out of my intense love for our collie dog, Laddie. He seemed to have a human intelligence and a better understanding than most children. When we played tag and chased madly after him in an attempt to catch his tail, he always successfully eluded the other children by various tricks and mischievous schemes. Not so with me, however. When I pursued him, he would always manage to run just fast enough to make the chase exciting, yet slow enough so that I could catch his tail. From the time when he was a fuzzy round ball taking milk from a spoon until he became a fullfledged, white vested gentleman, I adored him. When he was asleep on the floor one day, his merry brown eyes closed and his gentle mouth curled kindly at the corners, I was possessed by a desire to show everyone how sweet he looked. Unable to call in *tout le monde* at that moment, I satisfied my craving by drawing a

picture. This was the beginning of my artistic expression.

From then on I drew pictures of every conceivable object. My efforts nearly cost my mother some difficulty when I made a likeness of a neighbor's kitchen, detail by detail, not omitting the unwashed dishes standing on the table. Pencil was not the only medium in which I worked, for I delighted in cutting figures freehand from black paper, and when my grandfather presented me with some beautiful, silver handled shears to encourage my work along that line, I was thrilled beyond measure.

III

When my chum, three years my junior, went to kindergarten, I had to stay home with the baby, though I was of third grade age and had a greater knowledge than my chum. The baby, however, furnished me a great deal of amusement. She soon reached the story loving age and could never hear her fill of fairy tales. When I reached the limit of our stock of books and also of my eyes, I was forced to rely upon my imagination for her amusement. These impromptu stories pleased her a great deal more than book ones, since they could be concocted to order to suit her tastes and satisfy her whims. I found much pleasure in telling her tale upon tale and watching the interest grow in her responsive face. These stories were frequently illustrated by sketches, which brought such instant approval that drawn "movies" were in constant demand. And as for paper dolls—if she wanted a kind with hair "just so" and clothes "just so," I was called upon to fill the order until she became old enough to manufacture her own.

One day when I was taking one of my quiet, solitary little strolls around the block, two neighbor children from a nearby yard called out to me in a jeering tone, "How do you spell *cat*!" This was more than I could bear. The shame of their opinion of me left a permanent impression in my childish mind that has never faded. I know now that I probably knew

more than they had learned so far in school, that my reading was beyond their ability or understanding and because of older companionship my mind was more keenly developed. But at that time, being only a sensitive, easily hurt child, I walked disdainfully past until, once out of sight, I fled tearfully to my mother. Not all of her counselling and reassurance could wipe out the hurt.

I had a natural desire for human companionship, but because of a consuming fear of being scorned I would spend much time alone, planning the day when I should be able to go to school like a "regular girl" and amount to something. I wrote a little poem one time in these lonely hours that was accepted by the children's department of *Saint Nicholas Magazine*. This encouraged me to keep working creatively.

Though I did a little reading in my younger years, my mother never encouraged work upon me and I did not take reading up seriously until I was eight years old. I learned rapidly under mother's gentle instruction and used to follow her about the house, reading aloud books of bedtime stories, with the continual query, "Are you sure you are enjoying this, Mamma?" Of course she was. In fact, she couldn't find a more delightful occupation than listening to me read, provided my eyes didn't become tired. Fired by her confidence, I determined to make my life in some slight way measure up to her expectations.

IV

As I grew older and stronger and my eyes strengthened, I spent more and more time on my drawing. I sketched for pleasure, relaxation, and occupation, and the more I sketched the more I realized my inadequacies and I desired instruction. It was this which finally made me muster my courage and take the big step, when, having reached the age of seventeen I followed my mother's suggestion that I enter high school. I was frightened at the prospect at first, thinking I

wasn't sufficiently prepared, but I could not disappoint my mother who had implicit confidence in me. Though I was sure that I could never come near her expectations, I determined to make a try for a high school education at least; so swallowing my timidity I entered a strange school. I never regretted my move. The inspiration and encouragement that I received from Miss W——, my art teacher, kindled my artistic ambitions to a living flame which will never die.

Art work was my main interest in the first years at school, but my desire for higher things overflowed in a little poem which was a natural expression of my feelings. This was followed by a desire to write, and I gained a great pleasure, and still have it, from my feeble efforts.

My graduation in three and a half years did not give me as great a feeling of achievement as I had anticipated, but it stimulated a desire to take up higher education and really learn something about art. This prompted me to choose a university education where I could obtain a broader training than is usually obtainable in an art school.

My desire for creative work is growing stronger all the time because of some inexplicable urge ever present. Perhaps we all have this urge in modified degrees. I know it is not merely the hope of accomplishing something worthwhile but the exultation in the doing. I write and draw, however poorly, because *I can't help it*.

The plan this student used for writing this autobiography was a simple but effective one. Her device of numbering each section of her paper in keeping with her plan was unnecessary; the numbers could be omitted without damage, but such "spikes" are often valuable to the reader as well as to the writer for keeping the steps in the development clearly before him. Her plan indicates that she summarized each paragraph

of her autobiography in a sentence, and because her paper was an autobiography she chose incidents to make each idea clear.

Plan for an Autobiography

I

- A. My early ill-health forced me to be alone and to entertain myself.
- B. I watched my grandfather paint.
- C. My mother surrounded me with beauty.

The influences of
early environ-
ment

II

- A. My love for Laddie taught me to draw.
- B. I drew pictures of my surroundings.

The influences of
my native
abilities

III

- A. Entertaining the baby furthered my interests in art.
- B. My wounded pride drove me to determine to study more.
- C. I had a poem accepted by a magazine.
- D. Mother taught me to read.

The influences of
successful
achievements

Thesis:

The influences of my early environment, my native abilities, my successful achievements, and my high school work led me to choose a university course in art and literature.

IV

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. I entered school
and was inspired
by my art teacher. | } The influences of
my high
school work } |
| B. A poem interested
me in writing. | |
| C. My graduation
from high school
left my desire
for education
unsatisfied. | |
| D. I had an inner
urge for creative
work. | |

The use of the word "influence" may not be readily clear. It is here used loosely to mean all of the favorable incidents that occurred in line with her interest in art. If a person can pass his courses, he is likely to continue to take courses; his passing may be said, then, to "influence" his taking courses. If as a child a person was interested in repairing broken legs on dolls, later in caring for sick birds or dogs, later in learning first aid, and later decided to become a nurse or a doctor, these early incidents might be said to "influence" that person's choice of a vocation.

The important thing to notice in the autobiography and in the plan is that the student omitted mention of such things as a case of measles, a trip to another city, the death of a relative, or a picnic, because they did not contribute to her thesis. If they had in some way been relevant, she would have included them and per-

haps omitted some that she has used. It is the control exerted by the thesis that prevents the autobiography from being merely a list of events without any point. The experience gained from organizing and writing an autobiography in a similar fashion to the one quoted will be extremely valuable later for writing term papers. No matter what the subject may be the principle of selection involved is the same, for always there is a mass of information that must be sorted out. Students of zoology know that zoologists did not merely blow a whistle and have the animals fall into the orders. No, the zoologist analyzed his material and determined how it might best be arranged. We all do some kind of selecting daily, even if it is only deciding what tie goes best with what shirt and what shirt goes best with what suit. The principle is identical. We should expect to select our materials just as carefully for writing as we select our clothes for dressing ourselves.

The autobiographical sketch that follows is briefer than that one above. It illustrates how even a brief period of a person's life may serve as excellent material for an essay. The linking of details is fairly well done.

Autobiography

Reared in a small town I formed my early life to meet the situation. In this town everybody knew everybody else's business. This town was supported by a paper mill which had a vital effect upon the life of its inhabitants. The business district consisted of two stores, one on the north end of town and one on the south end. The Mississippi River divided the town into two sections, eastside and westside. Although the

two sections never fought against one another, the people always carried the name of the section where they lived. The people were all workmen in the factory and there was little difference between classes. The manager would sometimes invite the night watchman to dinner; and the local "unemployables" were just as good as the wage-earning inhabitants.

The children of the town were all about the same class, only some would be rougher, faster-swearing, and stronger than others. When a child became seven or eight years old he would have sixteen and seventeen year old boys as his chums. He would then be "one of the boys," not a social outcast or a person destined to go to the place of eternal fire, but just an average person. When a boy became sixteen or seventeen years old he became more serious and thus graduated out of this class. A diploma for graduation would be his first girl friend.

It was in this "metropolis" that I lived out my early years. I became part of the environment which I lived in. Because of my father's position in the factory I was thought of as the one who could do more than my fellow playmates. I was always older in actual life than my friends of the same age. In my own way of thinking, school was a place to pass the long winter months, and make summer come more quickly. I always got the best marks of my brothers or sisters; thus my parents thought I was a good son, except for the trouble I got in.

The height of my non-progressing career was reached when I was in the seventh grade.

The "Eastside Gang," of which I was a prominent member, had just built a shack in the neighboring woods. On Saturdays we would all gather there and have "feeds" ending up with a pinochle game. It was at these Saturday gatherings that we ate stolen grub and smoked our fathers' pipes. We acquired everything we ever used in the camp by this ancient method. There was one exception to this: we got our coal

for our oil barrel stove from a nearby railroad track; usually the losers in the pinochle game would have to look for it.

One day we had a chicken feed at the Camp. We acquired the chickens from a farmer living on the outskirts of town. We were caught in the act and for the first time in my life I heard my father give me the old quotation (along with one on the seat), "Crime never pays."

After this I lived a rather normal life and coasted smoothly through high school. Although my early days are only memories, it gives me a great thrill to live them over again in that air castle we so often refer to while day dreaming.

The brief autobiographical sketch, *My "Mother,"* furnishes our last illustration for the use of material from your own life. The writer has here stripped away all non-essential incidents and has hewed to the line, to his thesis. He has very intelligently perceived that through the sharing of difficulties human beings are drawn closer together, and he has included details of a trip that ordinarily would have the appearance of irrelevancy to make his perception pointed.

The outline deserves mention of the fact that it is one of very few outlines enabling someone other than the writer of it to understand what the planned paper will be like, so clearly has the student had in mind his purpose, so clearly has he planned.

An Autobiographical Sketch

Outline

Thesis: My whole life was completely changed by a childish fear of Negroes.

- I. I met my "mother" because I was afraid of Negroes.
 - A. A practical joke's becoming one of the most important events in one's life is, to say the least, quite rare.
 1. A friend teased me by telling me a Negro was coming from one direction when he was actually coming from the opposite direction.
 2. I was badly scared and in my fright jumped between the chairs of a man and wife.
 3. The lady attempted to quiet me.
 4. My parents explained.
 5. My parents and the Smiths became very good friends.
 - B. On that memorable day I first visited the house where later I would spend ten years of my life.
- II. The Smiths, my parents, and I motored through different sections of New England during the summers of 1922 and 1923.
 - A. A visit to Ausable Chasm was the final welding of the two families.
 1. The hardships and danger of the trip down the chasm in the storm made the two families realize what they meant to each other.
 2. We finally reached the cabin from where we started.
 - B. The trips to Washington, D. C., the Atlantic coast, Mount Vernon, and Mount Washington all made for a greater friendship.
- III. So great was our friendship that Mrs. Smith invited my father and me to remain indefinitely with her after my mother died in December, 1924.
 - A. I was so young I did not realize what I had lost.
 - B. Mrs. Smith became a "mother" to me.
 - C. My entire life was completely changed because I was afraid of Negroes.

My "Mother"

I was four, I was afraid of Negroes, and Mrs. Jones liked to tease me about it. Those three facts made all the difference in the world to me. It all happened when Mrs. Jones motioned toward the back door of the Belvue Tennis clubhouse, and said, "John, here comes Sam!" Sam was a Negro at the clubhouse of whom I was especially afraid. If I had known that Mrs. Jones was teasing me and had not seen Sam at all, it might have been a different story. But I did not know that, so my main idea was to get away from that back door as quickly as possible. I ran, but instead of running from Sam I ran right into his arms as he came out the front door. I was terribly frightened and I stumbled backward as fast as I could. In my attempt at a hasty exit I fell between two chairs. That was the luckiest moment of my life for the man and wife who occupied these chairs saw I was frightened and attempted to quiet me. I had been with my father and mother when Mrs. Jones spoke *ces paroles fatales*, or should I say "lucky"? My parents came over to explain my rude interruption, and introductions soon followed. The man and wife whom I had jumped between were Mr. and Mrs. Smith. My mother and Mrs. Smith sat on the clubhouse porch that afternoon while my father and Mr. Smith played tennis. When it was time to go home my father offered the Smiths a ride home. They agreed, and that was the first time I saw the house where later I spent ten happy years.

A great friendship sprang up between my family and the Smiths. It began with an infrequent game of mahjong, then dinners at one home or the other. During the summers of both 1922 and 1923 the Smiths, my parents, and I motored through different parts of New England. Never shall I forget the trip we took through Ausable's Chasm. Ausable's Chasm is a miniature Grand Canyon, and so, in order to reach the stream at the bottom of the gorge, it was necessary to walk

down more steps that I can remember having seen since. After waiting a half hour we got into a small motor launch for a sight-seeing trip through the chasm. We had not gone more than half a mile when a sudden rainstorm swept over the edge of the canyon. As the boat was open it was not long before the fifteen to twenty people in the launch decided they wanted some kind of shelter. They got it, but it was a mere bare plank placed on a shelf against the perpendicular side of the canyon. Those lucky enough to get under the plank were contented to have their heads shielded from the rain, but had to put up with mud trickling down their necks from the canyon walls. One man was really lucky, he had a torn strip of canvas to hide under. One extremely fat man, I remember, placed an old pail over his head. Finally, after ten minutes that seemed as long as a wet day in the country, the rain let up sufficiently to permit us to proceed to a point where a special bus picked us up and took us back to the starting point. We were ushered into a large log cabin that boasted a roaring fire in a massive fireplace. Here we stripped ourselves of all clothes decently possible in order to dry them, while we ourselves sat as close as possible to the fire without getting well done. Hot soup and crackers tasted like a king's dish.

This incident was the final welding of the friendship of the two families. True, the many other trips and good times we had together brought them closer and closer. There is not enough money in all the world to buy memories such as these. I agree with Claude Houghton when he says, "Memory is a nursery in which children who have grown old play with their broken toys."

A year later, in December, 1924, my mother died. When Mrs. Smith suggested that my father and I live at her home indefinitely, it saved a lot of worry, for my father did not know where to turn when my mother died. This was the answer. I was only six then, and did not realize what I had lost. I never did realize fully, for Mrs. Smith took her place

in every way my mother could have, and I know she would have wished it that way. Memories of my mother and Mrs. Smith between 1922 and 1926 are so confused that I cannot separate them. Many boys and girls lose a parent, or even both, at an early age, but very few are fortunate enough to have a second "mother."

And so my entire life was changed because I was four, I was afraid of Negroes, and Mrs. Jones liked to tease me about it.

Papers for Self-Expression—The Personal Essay

We all like to indulge in speculations of one sort or another. Our speculations often are of the I-wonder-what-would-happen-if or of the I-wonder-what-makes-people-do-things-like-that variety. Just such speculations form the basis for charming informal essays. The informal essay usually is simply the consideration of the truth of a statement (like "time and tide waits for no man," yet "haste makes waste"), the description of and comment upon some human institution (like picnics, marriage, movie-going, or poker), or the desire to share with others our thoughts upon some delightful occupation (like keeping bees, fishing, or stamp collecting) without wanting to reform people or sell them something. The essay writer is content to present his ideas calmly, if somewhat whimsically, to reveal his own huge delight in something, and not to storm and rant. The essay may simply be the idle thoughts of an idle fellow beside a blazing fire in a fireplace or over a cup of tea in a parlor. Since he is bent upon interesting his reader even as he is himself interested, he is

sure to include many descriptive details and perhaps even a brief story to give point to his observations. He may reminisce to his heart's content so long as he does not become boring by being too long about his business. He must not be too informative (who wants *lessons* with his cup of tea!) but he may be chatty and even gossipy. His topics may come from wherever his fancy may take him, but they should all be touched by his personal feelings and delight in them. The examples that are quoted below should speak for themselves and furnish some suggestions for the student who wishes to write something sheerly for the joy of writing.

Sheep and My Case of Insomnia

The age old cure for insomnia or sleeplessness is counting imaginary sheep as they jump over an imaginary wall. The monotony of this mental image is supposed to soothe and quiet the nerves and issue in sleep on downy wings of stealth. Consequently, I found myself in bed one night, sleepless, tossing, rolling, perspiring, and counting sheep. Black sheep, white sheep, green sheep, and red sheep passed in parade before my closed eyelids and took their turn at the fence of my imagination. This supposedly soothing monotony had in reality jangled my nerves to such an extent that I was ready for peace, war or the devil. I opened my eyes, expecting to dismiss sheep from my mind, but they continued to use it as a pasture. I could see sheep jumping through the darkness of my room, over chairs, dressers and bedposts. Some of them would jump out of the window, but for every one that jumped out five or six more would come in the door. In complete desperation I closed my eyes again only to see vast flocks of these woolly tormentors extending to infinity in all directions.

How much longer would this last? How many more sheep were there left in the world for me to count? These were questions that I asked myself. Determined to find out how long this sleepless nightmare would last I jumped out of bed, turned on the light, and gingerly picked my way to the book-case fearing that I might stumble over a sheep. Quickly pulling out the encyclopedia, I thumbed through the pages until I came to one headlined "Sheep." My eyes fell on the first sentence which read, "There are now between five and six million head of sheep in the world." By a simple arithmetical process I found that there were still about five million sheep which I had not seen or counted. I replaced the book, turned out the light and went back to bed resigned to the fate of counting sheep until morning. Suddenly the thought came to me that there might be some other cure for insomnia. I began to wrack my tired brain for this other cure.

I woke up the next morning without the faintest idea for a "sure cure for insomnia" because the instant I got my mind off the sheep I had fallen asleep—Wouldn't you?

Dear Miss X

Last quarter in a literature class I heard a lady say "boots" in a manner which will ever remain locked in my memory. You were the lady and you were reading an essay about an English bootmaker. There was something about your enunciation of the homely little monosyllable which caught my fancy. You even had a facial expression that accompanied each explosive little "boots."

I once knew a girl who could say "dress" in a manner that would conjure up visions of the most enchanting, youthful garments; and another who said "coat" in an absolutely disarming way. Perhaps some deep-rooted psychological reason has made me super-sensitive to these little words. I have

never yet found anybody who seemed to understand my pleasure in them.

Your "boots" is the most surprising of all because it is such a common word and refers to such a common, uninspiring type of clothing. A coat or a dress are in themselves a bit more glamorous than a shoe. Yet, when you say "boots," I can smell the leather, I can visualize the warm, comfortable companions of long country hikes, I can remember how, when a child, I would cherish a sturdy pair of high-top boots. At the end of a strenuous day I would take them off, turn them around and around in my hands and examine them, and I would marvel at how little the day's wearing had told on them. In those days shoes had glamor for me, so perhaps it isn't surprising after all that your "boots" has struck a pleasant chord in me.

Still, the above psychological reasoning doesn't explain it all. I have heard the word "boots" on a thousand tongues and never before have I responded to its implications of my past favoritism. If the receiving organism were all that mattered, anybody could say "boots" to me and I would respond with the obedience of a stringed instrument. As Mr. Longstaff would say, "This is not the case, however," and some of the credit must go to the transmitting organism.

Of all your rendition of "boots" the one I will remember longest is the last one, the last word of the essay. With two minutes to go you started speeding up the tempo and the class started mumbling, snapping notebooks and putting on rubbers. The noise became louder and you read faster. Just as the bell rang, you finished, hurling a last defiant "boots" into unhearing ears. Your expression seemed to say, "So there! You thought I wouldn't make it. Well, I did."

This note will let you know that one person heard that last word and that one person will never forget it or the look that accompanied it.

Beyond pointing out the excellent concrete details, the nicely sustained tone, and the delicate restraint of the following sketch, *Billy*, no more, I think, need be said.

Billy

He awoke with the afternoon heat throbbing in his head. He had been asleep for only half an hour, and was getting ready to turn over and go back to sleep when he opened a wet, long-lashed eyelid and saw me watching him. I had arrived, after he had fallen asleep, to take care of him while his mother went to some club meeting. From where I stood I saw Billy's coveralled little figure breathing softly, two sun-browned feet, a loosely clenched fist, and a pink moist face relaxed in tranquil peacefulness topped by damp ringlets of hair as dark, russet-brown as the deep shadows of a dense forest in a late spring afternoon. The eyelids fluttered sleepily; then one open, smoky-blue eye rolled in its socket until he had scanned me from head to foot. A quizzical frown disturbed his complacent face. Sleep still plucked at the open eyelid.

The room was as quiet as a cistern; only the occasional drone of a huge fly, which buzzed across the room from window to window and lighted with a dull thud as it struck head-on against the clear pane, disturbed the quietness. Even in the heat-haze outside, the chirruping of birds seemed far away and muffled.

I raked the sole of one tiny foot with a blade of grass with which I had been picking my teeth. The disturbed foot wiggled slightly; the other sleep-dimmed eye popped open, and the lad sat up with a graceful fling of his pliant body and propped himself on his hands. For the first time he indicated that he recognized me; the wet little mouth creased into a crescent smile and the shapely nose crinkled from nostril to forehead as he greeted me with childish chatter.

We sat on the bed as he recounted his adventurous experiences of the last few days. Our faces were beaded with perspiration, but the discomfort of it went unheeded as Billy rambled on in a serious soprano. Suddenly the huge ever-buzzing fly attracted his attention, and we immediately plotted to capture the animated flying-machine. Billy was to stand on the bed at one end of the room guarding one window and I was to patrol the rest of the room. I quickly routed the insect from my sector; the darting invader zoomed past the alert boy's outstretched hands and smacked angrily against the window. My active ally briskly brushed aside a screening curtain and snatched with gusto at the beleaguered intruder. Up and down, sidewise, and from corner to corner across the pane; in circles, in curves, and in straight lines, buzzed the fly, Billy's grasping fingers just missing their prey by fractions. In a new attack on the unyielding glass, the fly mounted to the upper pane, and the earnest boy climbed upon the window ledge giving no respite in the attack. The pursued rested in a high corner of the window but the versatile aggressor vigorously shook the curtain, and again the angry buzzing resumed. Unfortunately for the fly, it turned its course downward too close to the traplike hand, which quickly closed over it. An elated screech from the conqueror, and I decided that the chase was over.

No! the over-anxious boy had exalted in his victory too soon. Out of the hand crawled the victim, buzzed furiously past my head, then thumped loudly against the window behind me. I shoed and struck at it 'midst excited cheers from my ally. The chase was resumed on the other side of the room, as the annoyed fly returned to the site of its recent Waterloo, where Billy attacked with such vigor that the adversary was splattered with a cruel blow on the spotless window.

Billy screamed triumphantly and fell backwards among the pillows with a smothered chuckle, warm and exhausted.

We recounted the battle in detail, and as we did so I per-

ceived that another battle was to ensue. This battle Billy had to fight alone. He put up a valiant struggle, but the foe proved too powerful. The shining, smoky-blue eyes grew smaller and smaller, the tousled head lurched against me; gamely he shook himself, but it was of no use; the odds against him were too great.

A somewhat similar restraint is shown in the next sketch. And, speaking of restraint, if the student is not acquainted with the superb example of it, the essay *Mary White* by William Allen White, he should quickly seek the essay and read it.

Queen, My Dog

I considered it an honor to have people look at me as I said, "This is my dog." It wasn't necessary to talk about her or to make any elaborate statements as to what she could do. Queen was a dog of action, her shining eyes showed more than human intelligence, and her body, though not large, was covered with long, rippling muscles and a shining coat of tan fur.

Queen was my constant companion on evening hikes and down the road and through the woods to the supply store. She would run through the underbrush and leap over fallen trees with uncanny skill. I never saw her falter or slow down for any object, her skill in killing woodchucks had taught her to be quick, for the sharp claws and teeth of a chuck could do great damage if they were given the chance.

It is very difficult to describe my actual feelings for Queen. Perhaps it was a genuine love that forms from years of association together. I shall always remember the day I received a short letter from her keeper. The stern, short note named the date and cause of Queen's death. It read: "Your dog accidentally killed when attacking a porcupine last Satur-

day. Sincerely yours, Jerry." I held back a tear and left the room. In the privacy of my own room my emotions loosened and a few salty tears coursed down my cheek. Yes, Queen, I did love you.

Old William the Conqueror shows how the abstract qualities of characterization can be made concrete by the use of specific, concrete details. How could we better delineate a person? The simple style of the writing is in keeping with the simplicity of William. Notice the effectiveness of the simple repetition of structure in the first sentence of several paragraphs: "William is generous," "William is protective," and "William is religious."

Old William the Conqueror

"Wanted—Position as caretaker or handy man—Reliable—References—"

We were in the market for a man for our estate, as the government lists it. We call it our farm. After the usual checking on references, William was hired.

From his reminiscing on dates, William is at least sixty-five, although he admits fifty. His limber lumber jack trot can outrun a man of forty. He never walks. If he needs a file to fix a saw, that a stiff wristed amateur has ruined, it is with an easy trot that he brings that file without wasting anyone's time or money.

He is what one might call a prize package, not done up with jaunty ribbons but with the heavy cord of practical experience and stability. Wyeth's oil painting of "The Scout" is most descriptive—lean face, blue eyes and a moustache long enough to curl on special occasions.

William is generous. For months he stays on the farm

without a day's vacation. He then changes the ten dollar bills into ones and pulls them off one at a time treating all of his old buddies to beers. Whereupon at one o'clock, the old buddies knock him over the left eye relieving him of the rest of his roll. This has happened three times, but William says that he doesn't mind. A man's mistakes are his own, and perhaps after all it is his own business.

William is protective. Mother has hunted in Canada with Dad for years, and feels that a gun is your best protection, that is, if you have nerve enough to shoot first. Dad wanted to give William a sixteen gauge shot gun to keep in his cabin.

"Mister, I'd rather have a good stick," old William protested, "I can get so much closer."

William had burned some rubbish in the back of his house in the afternoon. On the sleeping porch, we awakened about two in the morning with a bright light shining in our faces. We thought the trees were burning.

"William, William!" I screamed. "There's a fire in back of the cabin!"

"William!" I screamed again. Finally his door opened and out he rushed in his night shirt with a long stick in his hand.

"I'll git the yellow livered prowler!" he yelled. "He won't come around here again, I'll git him!"

Around the house, and through the woods he ran.

"It isn't a man, William," I screamed. "It's a fire!"

"I'll git him, Miss!" he yelled. "Don't you worry, he won't come around here again."

By that time, what we thought was a large fire had burned itself out. William, not being able to find the prowler, returned to his cabin muttering, "He won't come around here agin."

William is not dumb. He told us that he really thought it over quite a while before coming out to see us, after we had replied to his "ad." He had once had an unfortunate experience concerning an "ad" a few years prior to this. A

couple had advertised for a man to work on a farm. William was at least sixty then; and they were a young couple in their late forties. She made the best apple pie he had ever eaten, but when she wanted to adopt him and take out insurance—that was too much for William. He would take out the only insurance for him—a beautiful coffin and a decent burial was all he wanted.

William is religious. His command of the English language is surprising, for he claims that he has never attended one day of school. His whole education has come from the Bible. As well as he can remember, his mother's name was Johanna. She and his father were dead when he had reached the young age of six. He was the youngest of eight children. His oldest brother, a sea captain on a sailing vessel, thought it his duty to take William with him. When he was nineteen and had just begun to drink, he remained too long in a port. His brother's ship had gone. The next thing he knew he had been shanghaied onto an English ship. He loved to climb the masts, and I can imagine he did, for even at sixty-five, he will go up a tree like a monkey. He did not want to sail on that English ship. He wanted to find his brother; but he was there and there he stayed. He felt sorry for the niggers, as he called them. The captain had told one to climb a mast during a storm.

"He was almost white, he was so scared," William related. "He got down on his knees and begged the captain not to send him up. 'Let me go for him,' I asked the captain."

I had seen "Mutiny on the Bounty," and I knew William was talking about the days before that terrific punishment was abolished.

"Did he let you go up, William?" I asked.

"No," William sadly replied, "I was lashed."

"What happened to the Negro?" I questioned.

"He was hanged by his tongue," replied William.

William became sad as he recalled another experience about

his best friend, Jake. He had made his best money spearing alligators in Mexico. I do not know where or when, but it seems it was a very profitable business until some men came in with the oil business.

"Did you really spear alligators?" I asked.

"We certainly did, Lady, but Jake was over-eager one day. He went in with his spear, and the 'gators got him—I've always been sad about Jake."

"William," I smiled. "You must have been quick with your spear." At sixty-five, he is still just as quick.

His philosophy as far as I can figure out is good—to bed at dusk, up at dawn, a light meal at night, and without chick or child, what could worry old William, after all.

The essay that follows—like many in current magazines—carries some of the same message as that discussed in Part III of Chapter IV. Again the appeal of specific examples is recognized by the writer, and her point is well and emphatically made.

The Modern Medicine Show

Ebony-hued comedians and stolid Indian sachems no longer try their ballyhoo on wide-eyed suckers. They are bungling amateurs in comparison with our modern medicine men. Some may recall that intriguing assault on American intelligence that was called the traveling medicine show. An ornately garbed "doctor of medicine" would assume the capacity of master of ceremonies in a free performance designed to allure the most incredulous into buying. Florid oratory was mixed with appeal, suggestion, insinuation and subtle warning in such convincing combinations that many a spectator walked home clutching a bottle of Chief Bulldog's Snake Sting Remover, or a can of Osage Onion Ointment for dandruff, fallen arches, chilblains and tonsilitis. Many a dose of Mexican

Microbe Killer or Cambodian Cure were consumed by an entranced and sickness-complexed audience, whose health was not altered by the colored sugar water or some equally innocuous ingredients sold under a formidable name.

The modern medicine show is conducted in lavish advertising in our magazines, newspapers and bill boards. Ailments, real and imaginary, are made ponderously important through multi-syllabic terminology. We spend sleepless, restless nights because of that social catastrophe, Halitosis (real name—bad breath). We sympathize with the young man who has lost his position in business and love because of his comedones (an impressive alias for black-heads). We shudder when we think of the devastating consequences of pityriasis, the disguised term for dandruff. Mystery is added to mystery by the use of symbols. "B. O." is domestic dynamite and social ship-wreck. No matter how good a girl's references are, or how efficient her work, she can't secure or hold a job if she has halitosis. She's a total loss until some friend tells her (what only her best friend would tell her), "I'm going to be dreadfully frank, etc." What a social TNT the symbol "B. O." is. A certain girl is pictured as a wall flower, though she is beautiful without being dumb. Finally some kind soul tells her that with religious, faithful use of "B. O." killing soap all will be well. Then, lo and behold, a week after she has used the soap, she is engaged and marrying the man of her choice! Modern advertising is the advancement of the medicine show technique.

Suggested Topics

A stitch in time saves nine; A rolling stone gathers no moss (old sayings generally); I do my hoeing in the garden, not on the golf course; Walking is fun even in cities; The truth is like an ingrown hair; Political powder-puffs; The radio reflects the comic strips; The ashtray as a barometer of emo-

tions; The American peasant; Suspenders versus belts; The airplane sees both ends of the rainbow; Seeing or just hearing the football game; Browsing through the literature of the piano; Watson puts a new needle in the phonograph; Tapping (dancing) your way to the top; Old typewriter ribbons and old razor blades; An amateur sees the stars (movie, stage, or celestial); Pocket boudoirs; Breaking records (sport or phonograph).

Papers for Self-Expression—Letters

In few instances is the audience so clearly defined yet so variable as for the friendly letter. It is for just that reason that discussions of the writing of the friendly letter confine themselves usually to what should be avoided, rather than to what should be included.

The friendly letter is a substitute for a conversation. That is the general controlling idea to keep before us. As to what we may talk about—the sky, almost, is the limit. If we are of a philosophical turn of mind, we may carry on at length and make the letter as serious as we wish. We can rave about a hobby, a new dress or suit, or a concert or game. We can be gay or serious by turns. But through it all we should remember to be clear and interesting.

We choose our words in keeping with the tone of our letter and with the interests and point of view of our friend. If, for example, we are slangy in conversation and if our friend does not mind, we are slangy in our letter. If our friend resents slang, we avoid it and use expressions that will not offend him. Almost

universally, however, there are a few things that irritate people. One of these is the "telegraphic style": "Have just received your letter. Want to answer right away, so here goes. Met Grace downtown yesterday and had lunch with her." The omission of subjects suggests laziness—as if the job of the moment were not important enough to require a little care. Do not hesitate to use "I," the subject that is most often omitted in the "telegraphic style." The friendly letter is personal; the frequent use of "I" is expected.

Similar to this irritating habit is the use of & for *and*. Economy of time and space is not enough to justify the use of the shorthand symbol. As a matter of fact, most abbreviations might well be omitted, for the friendly letter should convey delicately to the friend the fact that you are fond enough of him to take all of the time necessary for a careful, thoughtful letter. The person who disregards these matters errs sometimes in a similar manner by beginning, "Having nothing else to do at the moment, I thought I would dash off a letter to you."

But perhaps the worst habit to condone is the labeling of jokes. We all know the sort of thing: "I had better not tell you what was said the other night, for you might become conceited (Ha, ha!)." The reader of such a letter often suspects that the writer of it really believes him conceited. Don't insult your reader by indicating you think that he needs guidance through the mazes of humor.

Letter writing often fails to forward friendship in the

same way that conversation often fails. We fail to *provoke* people to be our friends. If we are not truly thoughtful of them, if we take them for granted and never realize the difficulties in the way of their adjusting themselves to our moods as they appear in letters, we may fancy a hurt because they fail to respond in their answers. Letters have greater difficulty than conversations in bringing an immediate emotional response because of the lapse of time between the writing of the letter and the time it is received. In conversation our friend hears us immediately and as the conversation progresses there is a cumulative effect, and our enthusiasms or despairs are shared and reflected at once. When we consider, however, that not only may the mood of the letter have evaporated shortly after the letter was written, but also that the letter may reach our friend at any chance moment, we realize that *strong* passing enthusiasms or fleeting emotions might better be omitted. Imagine our friend stopping briefly at his home or office merely to pick up mail before going on to other affairs. We have poured out our despair over a slight accident or malaise that he knows must have fallen into insignificance shortly after the letter was sent. He is left unmoved concerning us. Had we simply stated the fact of the unpleasantness or treated it jocularly, he could let it go at that; but we have showed considerable concern, and though he knows the occasion is past, he thinks that he must in his answer pretend to feel our despair. When his answer reaches us we are a little startled to have the thing recalled.

The friendly letter varies so much with the characteristics of the person who writes the letter and with the mood, occasion, subject, time, and the person to whom the letter is written that the examples given here can be only suggestive. Nowhere can it perhaps be said with more truth than concerning the friendly letter, "What is sauce for the goose may be ipecac for the gander!"

Of more serious consequence than the matters just discussed is that of upbraiding our friend in a letter. A letter containing reproaches may be read and re-read; old wounds may be reopened in a moment by the perusal of a letter written months before. We cannot provoke our friend to friendship by such letters, and if, as is often true, our reproaches were based upon a misunderstanding of *his* letter, we have succeeded merely in starting something that may never be ended, at least not happily. Letters declaring, "But I didn't *mean* it that way!", have little effect. The first letter is there to be re-read. Actions may speak louder than words, but we are too far away to act. Strong emotions, then, had better be left out of letters if friendship is to be nourished throughout many years.

Dear J—,

I wonder if you remember the last instruction you gave me before I flew my new plane to Minneapolis? I had it brought back to me so forcefully that I remember your exact words, "A hot day and shifting winds make bad landings."

It was such a lovely day when I left Duluth that, with a tail wind and a new ship, my caution must have melted into

thin air. After an hour of loafing along I failed to notice the temperature gauge mounting and, moreover, paid no attention to the increasing roughness of the air. As I bounced along I noticed a smoky haze in the distance and soon the buildings of Minneapolis were sliding below my wings. When I picked out the Wold-Chamberlain Airport with my binoculars I noticed a large crowd. "Why, of course," I thought, "it's Sunday, a chance to set the job in with a flourish before an audience." Give them a thrill? I'll say I did—and myself heart failure!

With a northeast wind blowing I encircled the field and came in high over the southwest corner of the field. At about six hundred feet I tipped onto my side and rode the ship out to fifty feet before I leveled off and cut the power to land. I glided down over the fence and eased back on the stick as my controls started to get sloppy, but suddenly the wind switched to the north. I was drifting to the right before I knew just what had happened. No time to think—simply take a chance—which I did by jamming sharp right rudder. The ship jumped, vibrated, and skidded around into the wind just as the wheels touched the cement apron upon which all the outgoing ships were being warmed up. With only inches between my left wing tip and flashing propellers I shot down the right of way, miraculously missing all kinds of ships. My wild ride finally came to a halt in front of the Administration Building—of all places! As I climbed from the ship, more traffic managers than I knew there were in the world piled all over me and, much to my embarrassment, gave me a thorough lecture on Air Commerce Regulations.

Well, you told me that I would learn by experience, and I certainly won't forget the first application of your warning. In fact, if you want to see just how careful a person can really be, watch me when I come up next week to get my skis.

Until then,

Happy landings!

B—

Dear —,

I've procrastinated miserably, but I shan't allow the "fatal two weeks" to pass without a word. I don't want to risk losing the thing dearer to me than life itself.

Were you, in your last letter, hinting at "the beginning of the end"? Please don't. It makes me shrivel and choke inside.

Please discount the rash statements I made about being unable to leave here now that I'm more or less settled. And that bit about clinging to college for at least five years is drivel! I would have college for only five years, and I'd lose you forever!

It was wonderful having you here for even so short a time. Such utter contentment and peace. I practically reveled in a sense of luxury and well-being.

The first few weeks of school weren't unbearable, but since you've been here and visited most of my haunts, I miss you terribly regardless of where I am. (However, I'll probably survive. That ability is one of the attributes of woman.)

Incidentally, has anyone ever told you you're adored by me?

I'll repeat this from time to time, but unlike doses of medicine, with no changes in condition.

I love you.

B—

Dear L—:

The wedding is over at last, and I can truthfully say that I'm glad the bride and groom are off on their honeymoon. I don't think I'll quite get over being the bridesmaid; just the thought of my walking down that aisle sends a thrill down my back. I can still feel my legs shaking, as if any minute they might give way. Everyone said I looked very nice, but I still have that awful feeling that my hat was just a wee bit crooked. I glanced at the best man once or twice, and from the expression on his face I could see he wasn't exactly en-

joying the procedure. He looked as if at any moment he might drop that precious ring.

The bride looked lovely in a coronation blue dress of lace. She wore a matching hat of blue ribbon and carried a bouquet of white Talisman roses, mingled with vari-colored snapdragons.

How we managed to get out of the church is something I haven't quite figured out. I know it took only a few minutes to reach the door, but it still seems as if the aisle were a mile long.

The bride and groom stayed at the church for a short informal reception, but B and I left immediately for the home of the bride, where the formal reception was held. When the bride and groom got to the house, they were greeted by a group of young college fellows who seemed to think banging on dish pans, yelling through horns, and beating on drums was great fun. After several futile efforts to kidnap the bride, the boys left.

Receptions, I think, are usually quite boring, but I really enjoyed this one. Everyone seemed to be in just the right mood for a good time. The food was delicious, and was served in a most tempting fashion. Little open-faced sandwiches of every kind were served with fruit salad, which seemed to melt in your mouth. The bride's cake was a white, four layer cake, frosted in white. Two small dolls, one representing a bride, the other a groom, stood on the top layer. The bride cut the cake and gave everyone a piece to take home. I followed the directions of the old saying, "Sleep on a piece of the bride's cake and every wish will be granted," and my wish did come true.

If you come to Saint Paul this summer don't forget I still live on Lexington avenue in the white stucco house.

Lovingly,

P—

The following is a good letter, interesting and appropriately informal throughout. The ending is perhaps too abrupt.

Dear K—

After leaving college last summer, I went to Glacier National Park where I had been promised a job of bell hopping. I was informed when I arrived at the park entrance that I was not to work at one of the large hotels, but at a park saddle horse camp on Waterton Lake called Good Haunt.

Surprises seemed to be in order, so when I arrived at Good Haunt, the manager pointed out to me a pile of fifteen cords of wood. It had to be moved from the beach, piled some 200 yards up the hill, and then chopped during the course of the summer. Some fun! I soon learned that I had to dump garbage, chase bears away from the camp, build fires (at four o'clock in the morning), shoe horses, wash dishes, help in the laundry, clean tents, and be a general handy man around camp. Don't laugh now; wait until the end. Getting up at four in the morning and working 'til eleven thirty at night was sure bad for my constitution.

It wasn't all bad. I sometimes would disappear in the afternoon and go for a ride in the mountains. The guides were friendly, and they sang a song that made me think of you and me in school last year.

“Well, good-bye, Mr. Greenback, I hate to see you go,
For it makes me sad to part with you,
But my bank account am a runnin low.
If-a-you and I should ever meet again,
I'd say, ‘Well, how de-do!’ (Tip hat)
So until we meet again, it means a farewell to you.”

Next time we meet we will have a duet.

Studying and football keep me pretty busy, but I'm glad

that school has started again. It is a relief not to get up at four in the morning.

R—

The light humor of the next letter is excellent and does much to make it a thoroughly satisfactory note.

Dear L—

I love life and I want to live!! That's just the way I feel at present; call me batty; inconsistent, etc., but as Pearl used to say, "Them's my sentiments exactly so!" Remember? I suppose you're wondering at my present state of mind, but first let me assure you that I have not had a mental upset.

Life here at the University is everything one could ask for. Perhaps it is because I came up here with rather low expectations that I am so overwhelmingly happy, but whatever it is, it's wonderful! I pledged the sorority after a hectic rush week, which I'll write you about later, and am now living in the house. Fun, fun, and more fun only begins to describe to you the joys of living there. It is all such a new and thrilling experience for me that I just can't help bubbling. Do you recall how I laughed when we saw "Varsity Show" together because it seemed too story-bookish to be true? Well, it wasn't far wrong! As pledges, we're given all sorts of duties, mine being to empty all ash trays in the house and answer all phone calls. You try studying while sitting next to the telephone in a sorority house! It just can't be done. I've never heard a phone so consistent in my life, but then with approximately thirty girls in the house, it's no wonder. Some of the girls are in charge of all bulletins posted. We have to sign up for meals or the cook doesn't know how many to prepare for. Signing up for a bath is also a new experience for me. Not that I never indulge in such things, but imagine having to sign a list to assure yourself against B. O.

But, on the other hand, there is also a serious side to sorority

life. We have innumerable rules and regulations that we must abide by. Each girl is in her room studying at eight o'clock, and for every pledge there is an active to supervise this studying. My room-mate is a senior in the business school and quite a brilliant girl. She disproves the theory or adage, "beautiful but dumb," for she is also the possessor of looks. It's rather hard studying on a chaise longue but until our desks arrive we have no alternative. Each pledge is required to keep a study chart and study at least twenty-five hours a week, ten of which must be done in the library. Actives or professors sign these charts, and should a girl not meet the requirement she is deprived of her date nights. So, you can see there is no time for foolishness. Our house mother is lovely and makes us all feel quite at home. Which fact reminds me, I'm coming home Christmas after all. Perhaps I'd better save some of our sorority pranks for later when I can exchange experiences with you. Until Christmas then, I am

Collegiately yours,

H—

The next letter exhibits a great deal of spontaneity and succeeds in making the predicament that is related amusing. The sentence structure is a bit rough, and the choice of words might be more varied.

Dear E—

Talk about getting into jams! I certainly take the cake. The other night I was out with B— and he asked me for a date the following week-end. Well, you know how forgetful I am—I naturally forgot about the date. Meanwhile your brother had asked me for a date the same night and I accepted. B— always phones me the night before we go out to tell me what time he'll call for me, and when he told me about our engagement I was dumbfounded. Honestly I don't think I have ever been in a tighter spot in my life, unless it

be the time we skipped school and were caught. I can truthfully say I was so hot for those ten minutes that I felt like a house on fire. You can imagine yourself in the same position. It wasn't as though I knew about it and could think of an excuse before he called. I hadn't the slightest idea of what he was going to say. Well, I certainly had to think fast, so I told him that my girl friend was coming in from out of town, that's you, and that I had to stay home. Much to my surprise he suggested that he come over and wait until she came and then get her a date and we could all go out. Just about then I was ready to pass out. I tried to explain to him that you would naturally feel tired after your long trip and would probably like to rest, but no, he couldn't see that at all. Finally as a last resort I told him I would go out with him the following evening.

When J—— came to call for me that night I asked him where we were going and he said to the Union. After we had danced awhile someone cut in on us and much to my embarrassment it was B——. I danced one dance with him, and while we were dancing he asked to meet my girl friend. Then I knew I was licked, so right then and there I told him the whole story. I was a little scared at first that he'd be angry with me, but he laughed and said, "Why didn't you tell me that in the first place? I wouldn't have cared—that can happen to anyone."

Well, here's hoping my forgetfulness has ended by the next time I see you, until then

Smooth sailing,

K——

The personal tone, which is essential to friendly letters, but which is not often found, makes the next an unusually good letter. A few more illustrative details would improve even this.

Dearest B——

I know now what you meant when you told me that the first thing you must learn when you attend a large university is to walk. I found out the first week I was here, when I had to nurse three blisters on my feet. After three weeks of it now, I have learned the technique of getting around in a hurry, which is very essential.

Our physical examination was an experience. We wear what the girls call angel gowns while being examined. The name angel gown is sarcasm, because they are anything but angel gowns! You get the feeling of being an insignificant little burr in a machine while at the Health Service. It's grand protection, though, so I didn't mind it a bit. In fact, I rather enjoyed it. The process consumed three hours!

I went home over the past week-end. It was perfectly wonderful. G—— B—— played for the dance at home. You remember my mentioning that orchestra before, don't you? It's very significant to me, as I have a heart interest among them. That accounts for the perfect week-end. Can you read between the lines here?

I love the rooming house I selected. There are thirty-five girls staying there so I really don't get lonesome at all. Some of us do our own cooking; in fact, fourteen of us do, including myself. Our kitchen is none too large, so usually there is quite a riot about meal time. But, fortunately, the girls are all good natured and everything runs along in a smooth, happy, well ordered way. Thank goodness I am not superstitious about numbers, because my room number is thirteen.

I am taking Writing Laboratory. It is such a fascinating subject. I love creative writing in spite of my complete lack of talent in that line. It was you who started me out on the path of developing a liking for it. I'll always be grateful to you for that.

Our psychology professor is an interesting lecturer. His slang is of a very special brand and intriguing. I can't ex-

plain it to you in so many words, but it's catchy and amusing.

I am just beginning to lose that feeling of being an unsophisticated freshman. Time is a wonderful element. Undoubtedly, I will eventually feel like a full fledged University of Minnesota student.

Affectionately yours,

B—

Our next example is appealing because of its reminiscent quality. It is somewhat stiff in places, but perhaps the young writer felt a little self-conscious about writing for his teacher of English.

Dear J—

It seems just a few days ago that we were up in your north country paddling our canoe. Bill and I became reminiscent the other night and reminded each other of the exciting, wonderful experiences we had with you. You will no doubt remember how we rescued the precious butter from the lake. The more I meditate on that incident the more I feel that we all acted rather foolishly. Imagine grown up fellows drawing straws to see who would dive into three feet of water to rescue a necessity like butter! If Bill had a stubborn temperament like ours the butter would have remained on the Canadian border for some time. I envy you now up there among the rustling pines and clear, cold air. There is nothing more appealing to me than bacon and eggs sizzling on an open fire in the crisp, invigorating morning breeze. I hope the chill of fall weather will lessen the pains in your left knee. I shall never forget your hooting and screeching the day I accidentally hit your knee with a canoe paddle. One would actually think you were in agony. It really wasn't my fault the porcupine moved when it did. An amusing incident of the trip occurred when you were going to snap that picture of camp. You will remember how you backed further

and further out on the ledge of the island and then splashed backwards into the chilly, red tinted water. That, incidentally, nearly caused me to go into convulsions from laughter. It was, I admit, very rude for Bill and me to stand by laughing hilariously at your predicament. You couldn't have restrained yourself either if you had seen the excited, amazed look in your eyes, the wild windmill splashing of your arms, and the tightened condition of your reflex muscles. It was a classic picture that will live long in my memory. Needless to say, Bill and I will see you just as soon as deer hunting is fashionable in the hunting world. Until then I hope you will remain as tough and rugged as the lone pine on Rocky Island.

Yours,

H—

Book Reports

Reading is assigned in addition to textbooks in courses in order to acquaint students with additional material and to urge them away from the idea that *one* book contains all of the existing information on a subject and that *one* point of view is the only possible approach. In nine assignments out of ten a student is expected to do more than a summary for his report. The instructor in the course wants evidence that the assignment has been followed, but such evidence can be given in many ways, most of them better than a summary. Unless the instructor gives specific directions for the report, students may safely follow the suggestions presented here.

If the report has no title other than that of the book reviewed, the name of the book may be placed on the first line of the paper and followed immediately by the

author's name, the city of publication, the publisher, and the date of publication. If the paper has a title, then all of the information above should follow immediately. The title of the book is italicized and articles within books are placed in quotation marks. The reverse of this form is also acceptable, that is, the title of the book may be placed in quotation marks and an article or chapter may be italicized.

Example A.

Essentials of English Grammar
by Otto Jespersen. New York.
Henry Holt and Company, 1933.

or

"*Essentials of English Grammar*"
by Otto Jespersen. New York.
Henry Holt and Company, 1933.

Example B.

"Students Against War"
by Ernest Hatch Wilkins,
in *Modern English Readings*,
edited by R. S. Loomis and
D. L. Clark. New York.
Farrar and Rinehart. 1936

or

Students Against War
by Ernest Hatch Wilkins,
in "Modern English Readings,"
edited by R. S. Loomis and
D. L. Clark. New York.
Farrar and Rinehart. 1936

The first part of the report may be a summary, but it should not be any more than *one-third* of the total

length of the paper unless other directions have been given by the instructor.

The summary is followed either by a critical estimate of the book's worth in relation to other books in the field or to the lectures given in the course or by an expression of personal reaction on the part of the student. A critical evaluation of a book is usually made in terms of other books just as an automobile is judged in comparison with other automobiles, or parts of a book may be compared with other parts. Especially should any new contributions to the field be noted and judged. If they are considered to be significant, what significance they have should be pointed out. Simply saying that a book is important is not enough; specific examples of its importance or significance should be brought out. Brief quotations from the book itself to illustrate points that are made in the review furnish the best evidence, but a long paragraph or a chapter should not be quoted. A brief statement of the ideas contained in it is sufficient. If a book is notably at variance with the instructor in a course, the different point of view should be noted and weighed carefully.

In some courses, considerable emphasis is placed upon the student's applying the material of the course to his own experiences. If an experience illustrates or refutes an idea presented in the book, then that experience should be told specifically. The student may also recommend that others read or keep away from the book.

The chart that follows may suggest other ideas or may be filled out to accompany the book report proper.

READING REPORT

Name of Student.....Date.....
 Course..... College..... Class.....
 Author..... Title.....
 Publisher (or Magazine).....Date of Publication.....

Type of Reading (check one) Novel ____: Short Story ____: Essay or
 Article ____: Poetry ____: Drama ____: Letters ____: Scientific
 Treatise ____: Biography ____:

Portions Read Chapters.....Total Pages Read.....
 pp. ____ to ____ pp. ____ to ____ pp. ____ to ____

GIVE YOUR ESTIMATE BY CHECKING

1. *Value of Ideas Presented*

Very Poor ____: Poor ____: Average ____: Important ____: New
 and Significant ____:

2. *Manner of Reading Required*

With Great Difficulty ____: With Difficulty ____: Average ____:
 With Ease ____: With Great Ease ____.

3. *Author's Presentation*

Very Obscure ____: Obscure ____: Clear ____: Clear and Con-
 cise ____: Brilliant ____.

4. *Personal Reaction*

Extremely Dull and Uninteresting ____: Uninteresting ____: Fair
 ____: Interesting ____: Extremely Interesting ____.

Most important ideas:

For writing a book report, the student might keep in mind questions similar to those listed below.

1. What is the author's attitude toward life?
2. What dramatic situations or expressions of important ideas make this attitude evident?
3. Is there any one idea which seems to dominate the book? Can you state it in one sentence?
4. Did the book alter or confirm any ideas which you previously held? Did you like or dislike the book?
5. Do you consider the book to be poor, good, or even great literature? Can you give specific reasons for your judgment?
6. Were there any general ideas or specific statements that you would like to remember from this book?
7. Were there any interesting and usable new words encountered in your reading of the book?

The review of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is a combination of report on fiction with one on biography. The language is perhaps somewhat florid, but it definitely reveals the reader's careful reading and thorough enjoyment of the book.

Seven Pillars of Wisdom

The history and background, all the complex factors that went into forming the Arab revolt, and the story of Arabia have been carefully recorded in great detail in various history books; Lawrence has himself set them down in a pretty bare, technical outline in *Revolt in the Desert*. I have no

desire to glance at more than a page or two of any of these books. I have not now nor will I ever have any profound interest in the Arabian situation during the Great War. This particular aspect, or I should more appropriately say this skeleton, of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was definitely not the thing that kept me chuckling from time to time, marveling at other times, but always intent and fascinated by the constant flow of amazing word pictures. It was simply that Lawrence has beautifully strung his reflections, his emotions, his philosophies on this skeleton, trying desperately to see through himself and in the spirit of desperation letting go in a controlled completeness that is as intriguing as it is wonderful.

The book is Lawrence right straight through; and because Lawrence was the person he was and because he had a great deal of skill in writing, a natural perhaps characteristic compactness and nicety of form, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is one of my favorites. To hope to see more than a part of him in his writing is futile, for, as in any form of self-expression, a good part of the original heat of feeling and emotional excitement passes off in the process of transfer. Instead of experiencing the warm, sometimes too warm, fervor of actual experience in this reading, he gives you a cooled, controlled reflected, crystal clear, finely chiseled picture that is beautiful for its clean cut contours and consistent aptness of expression. In saying this, I don't mean that it has been bled dry of any emotion or violent feeling that should be there, but merely that no reflection nor memory could possibly recall or reiterate the extreme intensity of his experiences in that two years of Arabia. There has to be a decided change in temperature. Lawrence merely mentions with little consciousness of impression and certainly little desire for effect that a six weeks' rations per man were one forty-five pound bag of flour and whatever water, good or bad, they might chance upon every three days or so. Discomforts such as this he continually mentioned with a rather detached, objective tone

as something to do with the body and merely secondary and negligible to the driving consuming purpose that kept relentlessly at his heels.

As a unit this whole story is the tragic testimonial to failure of a man that little could satisfy. Feeling for the English and strongly wanting to throw himself against any war opposition, he took up this Eastern problem as a Briton. To accomplish anything for England he must unite the Arabs. To unite the various feuding tribes and types of Arabs he must magnify to all of them their importance, give them a common consummate purpose in driving forever from Arabia the Turks, and choose from among them a brilliant, popular, tactful leader whom they could follow blindly. The more he worked with them the more interesting and satisfying he found the Arabs. Lawrence made many friends among them and as he was completing the small bit expected of him by England and was only months away from betrayal of these people whose respect he had won, regrets began playing about his mind and building a dream that grew to a possibility and then to a reality. He had come to accept the Arab purpose as his own, superseding even his original English outlook. While at first it was but a false front for an entirely different purpose he began to mull it over and see an opportunity for a grand coup, satisfying beyond all expectations the English bones, bringing the Arabs out of a static, poisonous apathy and setting them on their feet, and taking care of the regret and dissatisfaction that at times twisted and tortured his own mind.

It was at this time that perhaps the queerest, most difficult to understand, quirk of his character made itself apparent. He had virtually single handed taken Damascus, spent three sleepless days and nights organizing it and getting the right people in charge, was having praise showered on him from the Arab leader Feisal, from the English commander Allenby, had everyone and everything at his feet, when he turned

quietly away from the final success of two years—years as hard as any man ever spent—to return to England. Perhaps, as Fadman suggests, it was satisfaction through self-denial for he may have enjoyed more than ultimate success the puzzling over his publicized and remarkable action, not because he wanted publicity but because he must have an outlet for his uncertainty about himself. He couldn't understand himself so why should anyone else.

Lawrence makes the whole situation look far simpler than it could have been merely because he had the ability to write exactly what he saw, to refine and select these situations as they passed through his mind, straightening them all out, putting them in their proper relationships and spreading them out in a broad, comprehensive, organized whole. He had the capacity to see everything and everyone but himself as an analyzed unit. He knew people, could see through them, understand them, and like them or dislike them in a few moments of conversation. He could pick out the flaws in a situation or a plan of attack as easily as in a person's character, and herein, I think, lay the reason for his success as far as his military organization went. Only one who could understand the finest distinctions of temperament, the infinitesimal degree of difference between stretching his men's endurance to the breaking point or beyond the breaking point, could possibly have kept the myriad emotional strings of his Arabian puppet under conscious control and manipulated it with accuracy. He had a vision, an insight, a particular ability that is valuable in any man, to see a situation as a whole over a long period of time. He could organize something, envision it as complete, and then what was most important, see with amazing accuracy its consequences and effects. He was a realist and at the same time a philosopher whose philosophy was influenced by his realism to adapt itself to fit precisely into his situation. It was not mere rationalization that made him accept the Arabian attitude of com-

plete mental detachment from the body, but an absolute necessity that alone was the thing that let him take an almost impersonal view of the inconceivable physical torture and suffering he experienced. To the Arab the body must be a mere tool kept in the finest and cleanest possible condition to carry out every command of the brain. Earlier, in his first experiences of hardships, he describes the difficulty of keeping the emotions under control by separating body and mind, but apparently this is a matter of conditioning for later he seldom refers to any difficulty in this respect.

Reporting on Biographies

What has been said concerning book reports in general applies to reports on biographies. Some suggestions can be had by going back to the autobiography that was presented a few pages back. Few biographers write biographies merely to tell the events of a man's life. They write to make clear certain ideas revealed by the man's life. Questions that a student might try to answer in his report are: How did the subject of the biography affect the science or profession in which he was engaged? How did he affect his own civilization or the civilization of the periods that followed him? How did the biography affect the student's own ideas of the field he has chosen for his life's work? Did the biography give the student new ideas? What were they? Did the biography furnish inspiration to work harder or did it offer discouragement to others who might try the same occupation?

Writing the Research Paper

This section will indicate only some of the limitations of organization and mechanics, and some of the purposes of the research paper.

Most research papers are formal. The formality consists in observing certain rigid requirements of language, of organization, of mechanics, and tone. The difference between colloquial language and formal English was discussed in Chapter IV. The tone of the term paper can simply be defined as being impersonal, in keeping with the method of study. The impersonal quality is much like that of the scientist or of the doctor of medicine. Neither is professionally emotional. When a doctor comes upon a compound fracture of the lower leg, he does not say excitedly, "Dear, dear! This is serious! What a shame that such a lovely young person should have this misfortune!" No, he examines the fracture minutely and begins his treatment of it. The scientist as a scientist declares that the odor from rotten eggs is caused by the gas hydrogen sulfide. To the writer of a term paper in history, the thousands of men killed in a war are merely so many statistics. Why is the element of human emotion, of *humanness*, avoided? It is important that it should be, for just as an hysterical person at an accident is of no help to injured people, so emotion prevents a clear evaluation of facts. Buck fever in a hunter spoils his aim; buck fever in an astronomer spoils his infinitesimal measurements and delicate observations; buck fever in a stu-

dent studying the effects of rickets upon children spoils the value of his study. It is for this reason that the research paper offers the severest challenge to the abilities of the student of all the papers he will be asked to write, for it is the challenge that is found wherever individual and somewhat original work contributes to human knowledge.

A hundred term papers on the same subject in the same field may be as different as the leaves of one tree, yet all of them may arrive at the same conclusions. This is true because, as William James has said, the whole truth is revealed to no one man; he sees but a segment of the truth and presents it as he sees it. When students look upon the term paper as an unpleasant chore, they cheat themselves out of a keen enjoyment. The joy of the amateur gardener who has turned an unpromising plot of ground into row upon row of flourishing vegetables or a veritable fairyland of flowers is no greater than the joy of the student who, faced with a forest of books and a difficult subject for investigation, carefully clears, plows, harrows, fertilizes, seeds, waters, and reaps his crop, the product of his own efforts and unlike any elsewhere in the world. Both tasks require spade work; both require careful selection; both require patience extended almost to the breaking point over a long period of time.

The greatest complaint heard against research papers is that the subjects are not interesting. Instructors assign topics which they believe will be interesting and valuable for studies, but their choices may not always

appeal to students. However, has there ever been an instructor who has not encouraged students to write on special topics? Such instructors are rare. Instructors usually welcome eagerly all efforts to freshen term paper subjects and will go out of their ways to help the interested student. The complaint, under examination, usually reveals that students have chosen topics that try to cover too large a field, as if they tried to run a farm of a quarter-section when they have had no experience with even a modest backyard garden. What has been said above in connection with planning of papers holds greater truth for planning research papers. *Too general subjects must be avoided.* (Not "Politics," but "How Senators Are Elected.") At this point the reader might wisely review the classroom discussion of the topic "Carelessness causes accidents."

The real task in preparing the term paper lies in determining what books touch upon the subject, how pertinent they are to the topic at hand, and what books are to be avoided as a waste of time. Tennis players try the "feel" of many rackets before they select one; a golfer examines many sets of clubs before he decides upon one set; a woman tries on several dresses or several hats before she "charges" her purchase. The writer of a term paper must examine superficially many books before he decides what ones to read. It is a waste of time, however, to get many books from the library and read them all carefully before examining the table of contents or even a few paragraphs and chapters. If while running through a large number of books a student will write a

note after the title of each book such tags as "Looks worth-while," "Too detailed," "A good general summary," "Has nothing to do with the subject," "Too old," "Recent and seems good," he will be able to sort out the valuable references from the worthless and obtain only the good ones.

Such a preliminary survey of the literature on a subject can be made, however, only if a rough working plan has been drawn up first. Even photographers take several pictures before they attempt to refine one of the "proofs" selected by the sitter for the portrait. The plan can be refined and rewritten after the material shows a definite tendency toward some principle or conclusion. Some parts of the original plan will have to be discarded because little information can be gathered on those things.

Because the actual mechanics of using the library, of taking notes, and of making footnotes and bibliographies are discussed excellently in any number of books (see the list of references at the end of this chapter), the remainder of the discussion of term papers will be concerned with the difficulties of blending opinions, comments, theories, and facts from various sources, or as Dr. Johnson would say, of making one book out of two. The need for a basic understanding of these difficulties becomes all too apparent when a student hands in a term paper that consists almost entirely of a series of paragraphs of disgusting, undigested lumps of information paraphrased from portions of many books. Such a research paper does more damage to the student than

good; the study might better have never been done. The student might better have written freely out of his own mind, for if his information had been there for a fairly long time it might have mellowed somewhat, and in the end the student would have found more pleasure and less frustration than in his lumpy term paper. Thinking cannot be taught, but some of the processes of thinking (or digestion) can be described. And simply telling a student to digest what he reads, to think about what he reads, is not enough.

Our first concern is probably with *relevancy* and the student will do well to consult the differentiations between the various synonyms of "pertinent" in *Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition*. There must be some mark of identity in each of two statements if they are relevant to each other. In the plan for a paper on refrigerators, those details that had to do with the *convenience* of electric refrigerators were not relevant to the details having reference to the *economy* of electric refrigerators. Both *convenience* and *economy* were relevant to the *excellence* of electric refrigerators when compared to iceboxes. If one were to discuss the idea the leaves of the trees are green, he would not include a discussion of *green houses* or *green automobiles*. The two ideas would not move in the same realm as *green leaves*. If, however, one were discussing an idea like "The popularity of the color green may lie in the extensive greenness to be found in natural objects," then the appearance of green in all vegetation, especially in the green leaves of trees, would be applicable to the

green used in painting houses, ships, automobiles, and in dyeing clothes. Except in the science of thought, Logic, relevancy probably is more easily felt than seen concretely.

By limiting the uses of two words, *comparison* and *contrast*, further meaning can be given to relevancy. If we will consider *comparison* to be the pointing out of only similar things in two objects and *contrast* as the pointing out of only dissimilar things in two objects, we will have, respectively, a portion of the idea of what is *relevant* to similarity and what is *irrelevant* to similarity. The following table will show what is meant.

*A Table to Show a Limited Use of the Two Words
Comparison and Contrast*

Two Pencils

COMPARISON	CONTRAST
1. They both have graphite centers.	1. One is longer than the other.
2. Both are made of cedar.	2. One is varnished, the other is painted yellow.
3. Both have soft rubber erasers.	3. The maker's name on one is stamped in gold, the other in "blind."
4. Both erasers are held in a soft metal cup.	4. One point is sharper than the other.
5. Both have the names of the manufacturer stamped on one face.	5. One has a removable clip on it.
6. Both are hexagonal in cross section.	6. One eraser has been worn more than the other.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>7. Both have graphite of the same degree of hardness, No. 2.</p> <p>8. Both have a protective coat.</p> | <p>7. One shows teeth marks.</p> <p>8. One has a blue streak on the cup holding the eraser.</p> <p>9. One is a "Velvet," the other a "Round Corner."</p> |
|--|--|

Obviously, using the words as we have defined them, the details under *contrast* are not applicable to the idea of comparison. Such a method of reading books will help to keep similar ideas together and dissimilar ideas apart. The agreement of several points of view can be discussed in one section of the paper, and the disagreements can be discussed in another. In fact, a term paper usually consists in presenting facts that support agreements and facts that discount the importance of opinions that do not agree with a main idea. The student who reads for a research or term paper with an eye to comparisons and contrasts need not worry much whether he is "digesting" his reading, and the student who presents his observations of these things in his paper need not worry whether he is giving evidence of thinking. He most likely is doing both.

The research or term paper, then, attempts to combine the facts and opinions of many authors and present a conclusion that has been drawn from an investigation of these facts and opinions. Once the student has stated his conclusions, he must bring facts together to support his belief. Evidence consists of many things, some of which are statistics (carefully interpreted and ex-

plained), quotation of the findings of specialists in the field, and examples of the ideas actually at work in the world. The method suggested under comparison and contrast can be used effectively to show what would happen if the conclusions are not valid and what would happen if they are valid. The test for the effectiveness of the arguments can often be made by the student himself. He can try to quash his own evidence by suggesting counter-evidence. If he does this before he turns in his paper, he may be able to anticipate criticisms that will be made of his paper later.

Combining facts and opinions of writers smoothly and convincingly is not the easiest of tasks. Merely following a quotation from one writer by a quotation or paraphrase from another does not suffice. Suppose a student were trying to arrive at an understanding of what education is. His investigations have led him to include the writings on that subject by both Cardinal Newman and Thomas Henry Huxley. A paragraph from his paper might contain such sentences as the following:

Writers in trying to arrive at a definition of education often discuss its attributes and talk around the subject. Cardinal Newman discusses the relation of knowledge to learning and emphasizes his opinion that education should not be devoted to the teaching of knowledge if that is concerned only with facts. It is not enough, in his opinion, to amass facts. Real learning consists in sorting out these facts to make an organic whole. Huxley, on the other hand, is content to name those subjects that he feels should be the part of a liberal education and to declare that education consists in learning the laws of nature. In "laws of nature" he included information not

only of things and their forces but also of men and their ways. I think that the two men are essentially in agreement. Newman merely philosophizes while Huxley, the scientist, is fearful that education will not be specific and useful. Huxley, like William James, concerns himself with the practical applications of knowledge, while Newman, somewhat loftier in thought, sees man as so pitifully ignorant that *any* organized knowledge is important and declares that knowledge is an end in itself.

The student here has tried to combine the ideas of several men to produce one of his own. He does not hesitate to indicate his own evaluations, yet he is standing aside and coolly watching others present their opinions. The final conclusion will be his own, and he selects only what fits his purpose. Certainly he found little in Huxley's essay on the lobster to further his definition of education, unless he found an example or an analogy or two!

The research paper illustrates just what Newman felt education should be, for the paper should not merely be a mass of unsorted facts; it should organize the facts into an understandable whole. Because the results of the term paper can never be easily predicted, it offers just that joy to the energetic student. He will find that he will be forced to make many starts, but as he carves, fits, and polishes, the results of his own labors will take shape and be, as suggested before, his very own. The give and take of "bull sessions" are simply more informal than the give and take of authors when they are brought together in a student's study. If the student will realize that he is simply organizing a formal "bull

session" and take or reject opinions, compare and contrast ideas, as he does in the informal form of discussion, he will find his term paper no unpleasant chore, but rather a growing source of information and pleasure.

An Example of a Term Paper

Topical Outline on Opium

- I. The definition of the word "opium."
- II. Opium
 - A. The production of opium
 1. The discovery of the poppy
 - a. By the Sumerians
 - b. By the Babylonians
 - c. By the Arabs
 - d. By the Greeks
 - e. By the people of Asia Minor
 2. The cultivation of the poppy
 - a. The soil
 - b. The climate
 - c. The labor
 - d. The process
 3. The process of manufacture of opium
 - a. Sampling
 - b. Kneading
 - c. Mixing
 - d. Drying
 4. The derivatives of opium
 - a. Morphine
 - b. Narcotine
 - c. Papaverine
 - d. Thebaine
 - e. Codeine
 - f. Narceine

B. The medicinal use of opium

1. For the relief
 - a. Of pain
 - b. Of spasms
 - c. Of nervous restlessness
 - d. Of diseases
2. For the control of
 - a. Vomiting
 - b. Convulsions
 - c. Sleep

C. The opium habit

1. Opium smoking and eating
 - a. Effects
2. Statistics
 - a. Drug addicts
 - i. Women
 - ii. Men

D. The economic value of opium

1. The cost of opium
2. The annual exports

III. Measures for the control of traffic in opium.

Opium

Opium is an inspissated juice obtained by slightly scratching the unripe capsules of the white opium poppy, *Popaver Somniferum*, and allowing the exuded milky sap to dry spontaneously.¹

Opium was first used for medical purposes. The earliest known references to it are in Assyrian medical tablets and by the Sumerian ideogram which dates from the fourth millennium B.C. and signifies joy and plant, indicating that the Sumerians were familiar with its euphoric properties. Later references to it are found in Ebers's² Egyptian papyri, dated

¹ Taken from *The Scientific American*, Oct. 1, 1921.

² George Moritz, a German Egyptologist and novelist (1837-1898).

about 1550 B.C., which mention opium among approximately seven hundred remedies. The Assyrians, Syrians, Turks, Egyptians, and Arabs probably acquired their knowledge of the drug from the Sumerians and Babylonians. Hippocrates,³ Herodatus,⁴ Virgil,⁵ Homer,⁶ and other Greek writers referred to the drug in their works. The drug became popular in Rome and was distributed by shopkeepers and itinerant quacks. It was carried to India before the time of Mohammed by Arab traders, but its use there was spread by the Mohammedan invasion.⁷

In the seventh century A.D., the poppy was imported, going overland from India to China by way of Burma and Yunnan, by Arab traders. At that early date, the Chinese used the poppy for medicinal purposes only. Indeed, it was not until the seventeenth century that their method of taking the drug changed from swallowing to smoking. The habit of smoking was introduced by the Spanish, who had carried tobacco-smoking to the Philippine Islands. From the Philippines it spread easily to Formosa,⁸ Java,⁹ and the continent of Asia. The first Chinese opium pipe was a bamboo tube filled with coconut-husk fiber, opium, and tobacco. Good opium, for smoking, is obtained only by means of careful cultivation of the plant.

The successful cultivation of the plant depends upon a tropical or sub-tropical climate, a not too excessive rainfall, and inexpensive and abundant land and labor. Hilly land is generally selected as the opium poppy thrives best there. This land is usually more richly manured and more easily irrigated.

³ *Father of Medicine*—Greek physician (B.C. 460-359 or 377?).

⁴ *Father of History*—Greek historian (B.C. 484?-425).

⁵ Roman poet (B.C. 70-19).

⁶ Epic poet of Greece. (Lived about ninth century B.C.)

⁷ From the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 4.

⁸ An island in the China Sea which belongs to Japan.

⁹ An island of the Malay Archipelago.

For the purpose of irrigation, these lands are divided into beds about ten feet square. The beds are generally irrigated between November and February; however, if the season is cold, with little rain, the irrigation is repeated five or six times before the poppy flowers.

The poppy flowers during the end of January or early in February, and the petals, four in number, are removed from the capsule the third day after expansion. If the petals are plucked off before they are ripe, the capsule produces much less opium. To accomplish the plucking, the hand is placed gently around the base of the flower and drawn upward. When the flowers are properly matured, the petals come away naturally. These petals are collected and made into what are called "leaves." To make "leaves," a handful of petals is placed on an earthen plate over a slow fire. A damp cloth and pad are placed over the petals, and the steam from the cloth causes them to adhere to each other. To ensure the adhesion of the petals on both sides, the thin cake thus formed is turned, and the process is repeated. The "leaves" have a pleasant odor which they impart to the opium, and for this reason, they are used as a packing material.

The field consists of a forest of stalks each topped with a spherical pod from one to two inches in diameter after the petals have been taken from the plant. In the late afternoon, a man with an instrument called the "mushtur" goes down the rows, making a vertical cut in each pod. This instrument has four sharp blades tied together with cotton and a padding of cotton between each two blades. The padding keeps the blades about one-thirtieth of an inch apart and allows only scratches to be made to a certain depth through the wall of the capsule. The incisions are made from below upward. The pods are cut four or five times in this manner before they have yielded all of their juice.

In the early morning on the day following the scratching, the milky juice which has exuded and adheres to the incision

is scraped off with a small trowel-shaped scoop of thin iron called the "setwah." It is then transferred to a shallow brass dish which is tilted on its side to allow any watery fluid to drain out as this watery fluid is detrimental to the opium. It now requires daily attention and has to be turned frequently so that the air may dry it equally. The desired consistency requires three or four weeks after which time the opium is taken to the factories.

The crude opium is first tested in the factories for purity and quality. Then it is stored in large wooden boxes where it deepens in color from exposure to air and light. Every day the quantity of opium to be manufactured is sampled, assorted, kneaded together, and thrown into boxes. The opium is placed in troughs and thoroughly mixed by men wading knee-deep in it. It is then made up into cakes. The finished cake resembles a Dutch cheese in size and shape. After the cake has been rolled in "trash," pounded poppy stalks, it is put into an earthen cup and dried in the sun. The opium prepared in this way is packed into chests for export.

Opium is one of the most valuable remedies of the medical world for it relieves pain, spasms, and nervous restlessness, promotes sleep, stops convulsions and vomiting, and produces perspiration. Opium is also capable of relieving diseases in which none of the above indications can be perceived.

Although opium is a valuable medical remedy, it becomes an evil if eaten or smoked excessively. Opium smoking and eating are habits practiced chiefly by the inhabitants of China, the islands of the Indian Archipelago, and in countries where Chinese people are largely employed. Opium eating is much more deleterious than opium smoking.

Opium smoking is usually done by the smoker while lying on his side. A watery extract called "chandu" is prepared for smoking which is twice as strong as the drug. The "chandu" is roasted by the smoker on a slender metal needle into a pill about the size of a pea. The pill is placed over a

small hole in the bowl of the opium pipe. The smoker holds the bowl over a lamp, and inhales and exhales through the nostrils.

Victims of the opium habit lie, lose their self-respect and ambition, are forgetful, may be subject to fear and superstition, and are careless as to clothing and habits of cleanliness. A victim of the opium habit suffers from imperfect digestion, faulty appetite, affected kidneys, and congested skin. He is pale, has nausea, his muscles are flabby, and his endurance weak. There is at first a functional derangement of the brain. When the time draws near for his allotted dose he is nervous, yawns, may have neuralgia, is weak, breaks out into perspiration and is miserable. He takes his dose and becomes himself again, but after a time the dose has to be increased. If relief from his cravings is not given, he sinks lower and lower.

There are two methods used in curing the habit of drug addiction. One is the gradual reduction of drug opiates, and the other is their sudden withdrawal. In both cases, bitter tonics are given to replace the drugs.

Because of the great number of drug addicts and the great increase in the drug traffic, several conferences of the great nations have been held to limit the importation and exportation of the drug. After the war, the League of Nations was entrusted with the general supervision of the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs. The League created the Advisory Committee on Opium and other dangerous drugs in 1920. The League Conferences in 1924 and 1925 resulted in the Geneva Convention of 1925, providing for a Permanent Central Opium Board. This board gets full reports of the manufacture and distribution of narcotics. Its duties are to watch the international traffic in narcotics and to ask for explanations if excessive supplies are being accumulated in any country.

If the League has not accomplished anything else, it has

brought to the attention of the people the gigantic drug traffic and the monstrous harm it is creating throughout the world. Public opinion is beginning to demand such strong action against this illicit trade that it is no longer possible to dodge the question. The question must be faced squarely and a means for the permanent destruction of this illegal trade must be found.

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Linking Paragraphs

The same methods that are used to link sentences within a paragraph are used to link paragraphs with each other, that is, identical words or phrases, or synonyms of words or phrases, that were a part of the controlling idea of the preceding paragraph may be repeated in the first sentence of the next paragraph. Another method is that of "spiking" the paragraphs. If one paragraph or section began with "Firstly, we must examine the causes . . ." then the next paragraph or section may begin with "Secondly, we must . . ." A less mechanical form of "spiking" takes this form: "So much for the *causes* of discontent. Let us now examine the *results*." Even out of context, the sentence obviously

refers to the preceding paragraphs that have presented causes, and the one or ones we are about to read will discuss results. Such a sentence, because its linking purpose is so clear, may even stand as a paragraph by itself. It would serve as a convenient signpost for the reader. Since paragraphs are indented upon the printed page, almost any device that reminds the reader of what he has read and informs him of what is to come is permissible. Linking of paragraphs is much like the linking of stairs and passageways in a subway station. The signs should be clear first and interesting second. "To 56th Street" placed prominently is sufficient to guide most people but not all; some people miss even such a sign. If the passageways and stairways are carefully planned to lead people in and out conveniently, many signs may be dispensed with. So it is in the complete paper. If the plan is good, we can easily place the links between paragraphs. If the plan is poor, no amount of linking devices can fasten together flimsy paragraphs. Too many nails driven into a board split the board so that the nails do not hold; too many spikes driven into paragraphs do the same thing.

Some Consideration of Form

The title page of the research article should bear only the title of the paper and the name of the author, unless the paper is intended for a school course; then the name of the course, its number, the name of the instructor and the date should also appear. The spacing of this information conforms to the standards for writing, namely,

that the different items be placed clearly and pleasingly. As in all manuscripts, neatness is the first requisite.

If possible, the paper should be typed. When typing, indent at least five spaces for paragraphs, and double-space all lines except between paragraphs, for the space between paragraphs should be twice that between lines.

In printing, many devices are available for setting off quotations; for examples of such devices examine this text and other books. Quotations in manuscript, however, should have wider margins than the normal ones for the paper proper. The space between lines may be less, too, though the spaces between paragraphs should remain twice as much as that between lines.

Since the use of footnotes has proved to be troublesome for many student writers, let us see what they amount to.

Giving Credit for Materials and Ideas

A curious human trait induces people to give credit for some things almost to the point of being tiresome; yet the same people will avoid giving credit for other and more important things. Almost as rare as the day in June (long lamented) is the teller of a joke who does not begin with an explanation like, "Say, I heard a fellow say the other day . . ."; "There was a good joke in Fellerhoo, the last number . . ."; "A close intimate of the Dictator is said to have passed this story on . . ."; or, "A chap who knows the manager well told me that . . ." Frequently these people spend so much time trying to recall where they read or heard the story

that they forget the story itself and spend much additional time trying to recall that.

The attempt to give such information, of course, is based upon the desire to make the story real. Authority, flimsy as that of the sort suggested above, somehow convinces the listener that the story is real and important. The teller of the anecdote is content to bask in the glory of the success of the story and the resultant applause for his skill in giving the story at the proper moment. That he did not concoct the story does not worry him.

Since, as William James said, the whole of truth is revealed to no one man, most of us have to draw upon the experiences and ideas of others for some of the material that builds up our own ideas. There is, decidedly, nothing shameful in that. Shakespeare, it is well known, often borrowed ideas from earlier plays and transformed them so that they became truly his. With the growth of law courts and with the growth of the idea that man might own ideas just as truly as real property, writers and speakers have been a little more careful to give credit for such borrowed material. But there is another reason for giving credit: Formal notes (footnotes) furnish material for the next person. He can consult the works that are mentioned, and he can gratefully select or reject ideas and materials according to his particular purpose.

Footnotes, then, are merely like the introductions to the telling of jokes in that they add the weight of authority and permit the reader to make the necessary associa-

tions. The glory of having combined old materials into new ideas is still there. The writer of the good research paper and the teller of the joke may still bask in the praise of a job well done. His particular choice of the moment and situation for writing his paper is his own, as are the new ideas and conclusions that he presents.

The form of the footnote is simple. The forms that are given below are acceptable.

¹ E. G. Williamson and J. G. Darley, "Trends in the Occupational Choices of High School Seniors," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, pp. 361-370, August, 1935.

² See Saintsbury, *History of English Prosody*, vol. iii, 1910.

³ *Op. cit.*, Chapter 10.

The detailed instructions for various forms of footnotes may be found in any good handbook of the mechanics of writing.

Selected Readings

For the use of the library, for additional instructions concerning the use of footnotes, abbreviations, and the use of bibliography cards, the following books will be of considerable help.

1. Babenroth, A. Charles, and Ward, Peter T. *Modern Business English, Revised Edition*. Prentice-Hall, New York, 1934.
2. Curl, Melvin James. *Expository Writing, Revised Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 1931.
3. Jensen, D. O., Schmitz, R. M., Thoma, H. F. *Modern Composition and Rhetoric*. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York.
4. Richardson, H. C., Becklund, L. N., Guthrie, L. O.,

and Haga, C. I. *Practical Forms in Exposition, A Manual Designed to Assist Technical Students with Papers, Letters, Reports, and Reading.* The Macmillan Company, New York, 1934.

5. Thomas, J. M., Manchester, F. A., Scott, F. W. *Composition for College Students, Fourth Edition.* The Macmillan Company, New York, 1937.

CHAPTER VII

TELLING A STORY

The Uses of Narratives

Story telling is universal. From telling the short anecdote ("That's funny, I had an experience like that . . .") to the imaginative story based not at all upon fact, we all at some time delight in telling or in reading a story. The use of narrative is not limited, however, to entertainment, for often information is conveyed in the more interesting narrative form. The life cycle of the salmon, for instance, has been told extremely interestingly in narrative form rather than in expository form. Stories of adventure, of travel, of the lives of great men, and of history make the absorption of facts much more pleasurable. Serious essays often include bits of narrative to lighten the tone of the essay or to make clear an obscure idea. But no matter to what use the narrative or the story is put, the essential characteristics are much the same. Carefully identifying these characteristics and learning some of the devices by which they may be used enables a writer often to change a dull story into an interesting one.

The method explained in this chapter is not *the* way to write a story; it is only *a* way of learning some of the characteristics of storytelling and it offers a simple method of insuring, by and large, the writing of a fairly

interesting narrative. The method is, like that of studying description, somewhat artificial, and once the student has learned it, he is urged to resort more to his own devices. Especially is he urged to consult some of the references at the end of the chapter.

Narration in Relation to Description

For our purposes, a distinction between *pure description* and *pure narration* may be simply made. Where description makes use of many sensory details, and deals only with a limited period of time, narration uses fewer details and spreads them over a rather long period of time. The details used in what we have termed *pure narration* are often very general. In addition, narration makes use of explanation and interpretation which are forbidden in the artificial descriptive passages of Chapter II. Narration, then, frequently *summarizes* a scene that description would pause to depict clearly. For example, in Chapter II the description of the two girls studying uses many concrete details but paints a scene that lasted not more than half a minute. Because this scene is not exciting and, because no crisis seems to be at hand, it would in all probability be omitted from a story. Instead of many concrete details, the story would use general details to summarize the scene in a few words, such as, "A few nights later when the two girls were studying in their room . . ." The scene that followed the one described in the paragraph referred to above, however, might have been important. In that case, the important scene or crisis would be completely

described. The story might start the description of that scene like this:

There came a timid knock at the door.

"Jean!" whispered Ann, and she looked wonderingly at Ruth and then at the door.

"Better let her in," whispered Ruth. "You can't avoid seeing her. You'd better be wise, face it now, and get it over with."

Ann shrugged her shoulders and went to the door. Opening it, she said, "Oh, hello, Jean! Come in, won't you?"

But to give some indication of the situation and of the time, the story would have made use of the summarizing sentence suggested. Then the important scene would begin:

A few nights later when the two girls were studying, there came a timid knock at the door.

"Jean!" whispered Ann, and she . . .

The narrative portion of the sentence here served to connect the descriptive scene with the preceding scene. So short a narrative phrase might be called "a narrative link."

Suggested Problem

Copy or clip from a short story in a current magazine a paragraph of description followed by one or more short paragraphs of narration. Underline and name in the margin the phrases or sentences that serve to condense the time and to dilute the details. It may be that in the paragraph of description there will also be narrative links; indicate these as well.

This characteristic of narration is important: narrative usually serves merely to connect the important

scenes of the story, for a *climax is always descriptive*. And isn't that after all what we expect in a story? We want the story to move swiftly; we don't want it to pause over unnecessary details; we want the big scenes to come to us rapidly. And when a big scene does come, we want to be right on the spot to see all that happens and to hear all that is said. When our hero and heroine are in the darkened room waiting for the Iron Claw to reveal himself, we want to hear the faint, tremulous whispers between them, we want to hear the wind whine around the eaves, we want to hear the creak of a stealthy step upon the stairs that makes Geraldine gasp, "That's he!" and the hero command, "Hush!", we want to see the pale crack around the door grow almost imperceptibly wider and brighter, we want to smell the sulphurous odor grow more intense, more choking . . .

Yes, climaxes are always filled with concrete details. For that reason, when we write a story, we must decide what the important scenes are to be before we start to write. A story is planned, then, by scenes, not by paragraphs. And if we wish to be most sure that our climax is a climax, we will write that first. The narrative leading up to it can be written later. Writing the climax first aids us in still another way. Inexperienced writers try to start their stories with the "beginning," that is, with the *earliest event* that has anything to do with the story. (A little thought will show that in one sense the "beginning" would be at least as far back as Adam and Eve!) Stories never have "beginnings" in this sense; they plunge right into the middle of things. Modern

writers follow the same method that Shakespeare used. Shakespeare, you remember, opened his plays as if he had lifted a curtain upon a scene that had been going on for some time. We have no other choice. If, however, something happened long before our story begins and is necessary to the story, we can bring that information in casually as we find a need for it. In the story that will be used for illustration in the next few pages, an example of bringing previous events into the story is to be found in the conversation between Jeffs and the old gardener.

"They are the lilies." Jeffs' voice bore a trace of heaviness.

The gardener started. "Not the white lilies . . . the beautiful white lilies your wife loved?"

"The same lilies," Jeffs answered, "but not once in the two years since Louisa died have they borne a blossom."

The underlined phrases refer, obviously, to incidents that occurred before our story begins. Starting the story as far back as that and telling in great detail all that transpired is unnecessary for the purposes of the story. Much better is it to *start at the latest possible moment* and bring in carefully previous events that are important. Even *Anthony Adverse*, long as it is, does not start at "the beginning"; it opens before Anthony is born, but rather late, after all, in the life of his mother. Would we expect the story to open with the birth of his great-great-great-grandmother and come slowly down to Anthony? The better way, and the easiest in spite of what it may seem, is that of writing the last scene first; then, starting with the latest possible moment, write

the narrative and important scenes that lead to the last scene.

Before we see how this is done, we should examine one or two other things.

Sources of Ideas for Stories

Some of us are blessed with a mind fertile with plots of stories, but most of us have to search and search for ideas. Though we ourselves have to be on the lookout for story subjects, we can make use of other people very easily. A newspaper has many reporters ranging the cities and country looking for "stories"; their results are published in the daily papers, and there is a mine of suggestions for us. Only rarely does a reporter approach a story as we would. He gives his climax away in the headline, and we want to keep that a secret until the end. He gives only enough details to make clear what has happened but he is not interested in portraying the inner states of mind or in showing each step in the development. Therefore, if we take the reporter's summary of his findings and try to see what actually happened as if we ourselves had witnessed every incident in the train of events and try to explain what made the people act as they did, we will have a story—in fact, we might have a novel as the result! An advertisement that one student clipped from the Personal Column in one of the daily papers suggests the beginning, middle, or climax of a romantic story. The clipping read:

FOR SALE a hope chest of hand embroidered linen, or will trade for typewriter.

A story based on that clipping would have to answer such questions as: What happened to cause the girl to insert this advertisement? Did her fiancé die? Or was it that she herself had died and that it was her parents who had inserted the ad? If she herself wrote the ad, did some man see it, and did he and she fall in love with each other? But no matter how a writer treated it, a story would be almost bound to come out of it.

How one writer found a clipping (which will be given you later) and wrote a story is illustrated below. First he wrote the climax, then the *dénouement* (or untangling of the results), and finally the opening scenes and the narrative leading to the climax. As is evident, he tried to give the details of voice, gesture, and scene that might have lain back of the clipping. First, his climax.

One morning, the gardener went to the greenhouse. The sun shone brightly through the glass dome above, vividly lighting the interior with the long tables of moist green foliage and big leaved palms reaching overhead. He went directly to the sunny corner where the lilies were placed, for he expected the buds to be open any morning now. He could already see them in his mind—glistening white petals curving out gracefully, with delicate pollen laden pistils in the center. Abruptly he came upon the flowers. He stopped short, his eyes dilated in surprise. The sun's rays were playing upon the blossoms, but instead of glistening white, the petals were of deep crimson.

There are many sensory details in this descriptive paragraph, as there should be in a climax. Perhaps this does not seem to be a climax. The narrative leading up

to this scene should determine that. The opening scenes and the narrative links are as follows:

It was with uncertain step that old Mr. Jeffs skirted the tulip beds and cut across the lawn of his venerable friend the retired gardener. Already he could see the gardener resting in his arbor of white trellis work overhung with climbing roses.

"I've brought these," Jeffs began after the gardener's welcome, "for your garden." He carefully laid a bundle upon the bench between them. The gardener looked upon the bundle with interest. "They are the lilies." Jeffs' voice bore a trace of heaviness.

The gardener started. "Not the white lilies . . . the beautiful white lilies your wife loved?"

"The same lilies." Jeffs answered, "but not once in the two years since Louisa died have they borne a blossom. They will not bloom. She loved them. Perhaps you can make them bloom again for me."

The gardener unwrapped the bundle, revealing three plants with foliage green enough, but of blossom or of bud there was no sign.

"This is strange. This is the season for them to bloom," the gardener commented thoughtfully, but when he looked up, Jeffs had already gone. "I will give them the choicest corner of my greenhouse," he vowed. "They must bloom again for Jeffs."

Three years passed. The gardener cared for the lilies each day; he called into play every strategy acquired in his profession of gardening, but the three bulbs bore only green leaves. Jeffs came to the greenhouse frequently, inquiring anxiously about the lilies.

Then one spring, wonder of wonders! Each lily sent up a bud. Jeffs was joyful. "You have succeeded. There will be blossoms for me in a few days!" he cried.

Now if the paragraph that was written as the climax is added, it will be seen that the narrative leads up to it. The plot of the short-short story was concerned with making the lilies bloom. Because they bloomed, we could say that the story had a happy ending and was comic rather than tragic. The question answered has been, Will the lilies bloom? It is *ironical* that though the lilies bloomed, they bloomed in an unexpected way. The *dénouement* should try to explain this. And the brief paragraph added after the climax does just this.

For one short moment he stood in awe; then he hastened to Jeffs' home. He burst into the living room, opened his mouth to call the name of his friend, but the words died upon his lips. In a chair at the window, his head upon his breast, sat the lifeless Jeffs, the pallor of death upon his face.

The story, though very brief, is complete. The narration loses no time in its swift motion to its conclusion; it skips over unimportant details by summarizing them ("Three years passed!" . . . "Then one spring . . .") The reader would be bored by countless details of how the gardener watered the plants, moved them from one favorable place to another, loosened the earth around the roots, and tried various kinds of fertilizer on them. The important thing is, Did they bloom? How? Why?

But is the ending unfair? Is it unpredicted? If the story is examined even casually, the student's care to prepare the reader for the ending will be evident. He has chosen words that will be in keeping with the ending; there is a foreboding about them. This foreboding, or

foreshadowing is important and should not be overlooked in writing any story. The effect of the following words and phrases are in keeping with the mood of the story as well as with the ending: "*old Mr. Jeffs,*" "*venerable friend,*" "*trace of heaviness,*" "*since Louisa died,*" "*will not blossom,*" "*have not blossomed,*" "*make them bloom for me,*" "*must bloom again for Jeffs.*"

The clipping concerning the strange blossoming of the lilies is reproduced here.

LILY CHANGES ITS
COLOR AS WIDOWER
OR GROWER DIES

Swansea, England, Nov. 15—(1929) The weird blossoming of a dead woman's flowers has furnished the town of Swansea with a mystery which seems destined never to be solved. The story is told as follows:

Several years ago Mrs. Alfred Jeffs, a prominent resident, died suddenly. She had been fond of flowers, especially lilies. Immediately after her death several white lilies in her garden suddenly stopped blooming. Her husband gave them to a gardener, who tended them carefully, but they remained barren and flowerless.

A few days ago the plants bloomed again as suddenly as they had ceased flowering. The flowers, however, instead of being white, were deep crimson.

The gardener, amazed by the sudden change, hurried to tell Jeffs. When he arrived at the house, he found Jeffs had died the same day.

Another writer in giving an account of an incident in her trip to California failed to make use of foreshadowing and her story fell somewhat flat. On the train, she

had noticed a young man, lame in one leg, who was accompanied by an older man she had assumed to be an uncle. She tried to make friends with the young man, but he was very quiet and would answer her questions only briefly. After she had sat with him in the dining car, he stopped going to the car and took his meals in his compartment. She had been drawn to the young man because he had appeared to be very lonesome and the uncle did not seem to pay much attention to the boy. At a junction point, she found the reason for all of this. The boy and the older man left the train there, and she saw that they were handcuffed together now. The boy was on his way to prison. If this student had prepared us for such an ending by using such expressions as "He dragged his left leg as if he wore a ball and chain" (he actually had a lead pipe locked to his leg below his knee to prevent him from running away and was not crippled at all), "He gazed sadly out of the car window as out of a prison," or "What could cause such a solitude," she would not have given the story away, but she would have enhanced the story's suspense and would have prepared us for the ending.

A beautiful example of foreshadowing is to be found in John Russell's short story, "The Price of a Head" (included in *A Book of Modern Short Stories*, edited by Dorothy Brewster). The reader can guess the ending of the story from the first two or three pages. An unusually acute reader has been known to do it from reading the first paragraph. Of all of the synonyms

there are for the words, Russell uses only those that have significance for his story.

Though foreshadowing is very necessary to a story, other means must be used to insure that scenes are prepared for. As in description where the details should grow naturally out of preceding details, so in narrative the scenes should also grow out of preceding scenes. This is well known and much exaggerated in melodrama. There is never any doubt why the villain taunts the father of our heroine with the coming foreclosure of the mortgage; his threat goes back to the scene in which our heroine declared, "No! No! A thousand times, No!"

Plot

The plan for a story demands that a *plot* be decided upon first, and then the important scenes are indicated. The plan indicates what will be essentially description and what will be essentially narration. We may understand what a *plot* is very easily. "A" wants to do something. We are told why he wants to do it and what prevents his doing it. The story consists of seeing whether he overcomes the obstacle in his way or whether he fails to overcome it. If he succeeds, the story is comic; if he fails, it is tragic. The same plot may be used over and over again, for by merely changing the character of the hero, the scene of the story, and the thing the hero wishes to do, we change the story. If we complicate the story a little by making "A" and "B" our two central characters and have them opposed by two other characters, "C" and "D," we add the in-

terest inherent in more people. For example, "A" might be a good-looking Irish mate on a Pacific passenger steamer; "B" might be the redheaded, independent, saucy, spoiled (but lovable, of course!) daughter of the owner of the line. They fall in love with each other (beginning with dislike, of course!), but "A's" mother, a widow (who is our character "C"), and "B's" father, a widower (our character "D"), want to prevent the marriage. How "A" and "B" overcome the opposition of "C" and "D" furnishes the story. If in the mix-up, "C" and "D" also fall in love with each other and also run away to be married, then we have a sub-plot. Merely by changing the characters of our people, their social position, the scene, and what they want to do will give us a new plot and a new story. Someone must attempt something and win or lose in the attempt.

The method outlined above can be used just as well for stories of fishing or hunting trips as for imaginative stories.

Suggested Topics for Stories

1. Retell the story of Jack and Jill in a modern version.
2. Retell a scene from history imaginatively as if you had been a witness to the events.
3. Materially change the ages of the characters and the scene of a story that you have recently read. Rewrite the story, using much the same plot.
4. Modernize one of Grimm's or Andersen's fairy tales.
5. Retell imaginatively (modernize if you wish) a narrative from the Old Testament.

Conversation

If conversation in stories had no more than a psychological effect from breaking up the usual solidity of the printed page, conversation would be justifiable in stories. Readers frequently turn the pages of a book to see whether there is much conversation, and if page after page of solid printing appears without any signs of dialogue, they often put the book down as being dull, without having read a page of it. Dialogue serves far greater purposes, however, for some things cannot be otherwise effectively explained. One of these characteristics of dialogue was pointed out in the explanation of Chart A in Chapter II. Dialogue appeals to the physical sense of sound and it serves to reveal what a person is thinking or feeling. In the story of the lilies just analyzed, dialogue economically brought out events that had occurred before the time of the story itself. Dialogue, without being realistic, gives an impression of reality to the scenes in which it occurs. And this is important, for often the beginning writer tries either to present everything that might be said in life in a similar situation or to write conversation that is bookish and far removed from how people actually talk. Even in the amazingly diffuse, yet compact, dialogue to be found in the short stories and novels of Ernest Hemingway, much has been omitted, for unlike real conversation, the speeches follow each other naturally and push the story forward. The details of the dialogue in stories must be selected as carefully as de-

tails are for descriptive or explanatory paragraphs. They must, to reiterate, seem real, though they are unreal, present past events when necessary, and finally be in keeping with the scene so as to move the narrative ahead.

Besides being in keeping with the scene, dialogue must be in keeping with the character who speaks and the character spoken to. A student talking to his mother over the telephone does not speak in the same fashion as he would if he were talking to a dean. Likewise the language used in a moment of anger is not exactly like the language used in a moment of calm. The different possibilities are many, yet no matter what the situation is or what person may be addressed, everyone has certain habits of speech that appear at all times. These characteristic expressions, or tags, may be a phrase of favorite slang, a set phrase (like "Was he *ever* . . . ?" used in combination with other words, such as, "Was he *ever* excited?", "Was he *ever* surprised?", "Was it *ever* good?" and meaning of course, he was excited, surprised, etc.), or perhaps a certain way of pronouncing a common word. Perhaps the tag is more a manner of speaking. Galsworthy has one of his characters "jump," that is, change the subject of conversation often and rapidly. Other tags of character might be like that of the person prone to an almost boring inclusion of all minute details and many somewhat irrelevant ones when telling of a slight incident that occurred to him. ("You know, when I went to the grocery store for some lemons—the youngsters wanted

some lemonade—it was awfully hot, and I thought it would be better for them than pop—I don't believe pop is good for them, do you?—anyway I went to the store for some lemons on Friday night just after dinner—Friday night? It must have been Friday because I just paid the rent—I heard some shots and people shouting. Was I scared! I . . .") At any rate, a close observation of people speaking will furnish much material for writing dialogue.

But page after page of nothing except dialogue often fails miserably to achieve its goal. Conversation must not seem to come out of the thin air. Some description of the scene in which the characters appear should be given. If the student and the dean are talking, then whether they have met in a street car, a bus station, the dean's office, or at a football game, must be indicated. Their movements about a room should be also indicated, for those things also give reality to the writing.

Gestures in Dialogue

Of even greater importance, if that is possible, than a description of the setting is the inclusion of gesture. Gestures are silent but eloquent means of expression. They indicate often more truly than anything else the state of emotion of a speaker and add emphasis, as well as reality, to what is said. Broadly speaking, gesture includes more than motions of the hands. A wink to a third person will change completely the meaning of a sentence spoken to a second person. (Jane winked at Mary as she said to Helen, "Oh, I *like* Charlie. He's

such an amusing chap!") A raised eyebrow, a shrug of the shoulders, a smile, a spreading of the hands, palms upward, a frown, tapping a cigarette nervously in an ash tray, drumming with fingers on a table, glancing nervously and often at a clock or wrist watch, wagging a finger, shoving hands into trousers pockets, tugging at an ear, pulling a kid glove partly off, then on, smoothing a stray lock of hair into place, powdering a nose, tying and retying a shoelace, idly snapping a rubber band, patting a shoulder . . . the list is infinite, and all serve to make conversation (or a scene) effectively real. Here again, actual observation of people will furnish the material for the writer. He will find fresher gestures in that way than if he were to read hundreds of books to see how authors have used them.

The mechanics of putting conversation on paper trouble some students. There is very little to observe. The speech of each person is placed in a separate paragraph, unless that speech is very long. Then the usual, logical division of writing into paragraphs is observed. Only the words that are actually said are included in quotation marks (single or double), the *he said*, *she replied*, or *they shouted* being considered merely as parenthetical remarks. Whether single or double quotation marks are used does not matter, so long as the writer is consistent. Galsworthy used double quotation marks to indicate all remarks that were said aloud and single quotation marks to indicate all that were *thought* by a speaker but not actually uttered. ("Good-bye, Mr. Beans," he said. He thought to himself, "What a

nuisance that chap is! Faugh!') The other marks of punctuation used for conversation follow the same conventions that are used normally in writing.

Though readers skim along rapidly and never notice little tags used to indicate dialogue, a writer becomes overly conscious of the number of times he is forced to use the word *said*. He should not let that trick him into abandoning the use of *he said* and into resorting, for variety, to expressions that are typical of the poorest of western stories. To have our hero or villain never utter a remark in a normal way is to make the story seem absurd. Some examples of tags to be avoided or used only sparingly are: "Try an' make me do it!" he *taunted*; "I'll take whatever you give me," he *gritted* through his clenched teeth; Harold *barked*, "Get back in your holes, you rats!"; "Viper! You've lived too long!" he *spat* at the cowering, now tearful, thug. A few such descriptive verbs go far in dialogue. *Retorted*, *laughed*, *explained*, *cried*, *groaned*, or *joked* have had long and honorable lives, but, strangely enough, we seldom grow tired of the humble *said*, except when we are writing it.

Examples of Narrative

The first three of the five following selections from student writing are essentially simple narrative; the last two are a narrative and story which had their source in newspaper items. The clipping from the newspapers is reproduced for one of these, but the clipping that belonged to the last paper somehow dis-

appeared in the depths of the files. I must confess that I was tempted to write a clipping to replace it from memory, but such editorial "faking" is surely inexcusable! The story is included—clipping or no clipping—because it is genuinely good.

My First Dance presents very realistically the attitude of a fifteen-year-old. The climax is weakened by the lack of sufficient detail, however.

My First Dance

"Telephone, Estelle," my aunt called.

"I'll be right down," I yelled back. I slid down the banister and hit the bottom of the steps with a bang. Nine times out of ten I did this, landing with a thud at the bottom, despite warnings that if I didn't stop the railing would be removed.

"Hello," I gasped breathlessly.

"Say, Estelle, the rest of the bunch are going to a barn dance Friday night, would you like to come with me?" Dick asked.

Of course, I would like to go, but I'll bet the rest of the family would have plenty to say about my going. "Call me tomorrow and I'll let you know," I said.

During the day I tried to gain courage to ask my aunt, and when I did she looked at me dumbfounded. She had seen me tumble, trip, fall and drop so many things that she was a nervous wreck wondering what I would break next; it didn't seem possible that I was old enough to go to a dance. I reminded her that I was fifteen and three-quarters years old.

"I'll ask your uncle this evening." She looked at me and sighed.

Much to my chagrin she brought it up at the dinner table. My brother, Tom, snickered and said, "Aw, she can't dance.

Why let her go?" I screwed up my face at him, but that didn't discourage him any. After much discussion and persuasion on my part my uncle said I could go.

The dance started at eight. I was dressed at seven. Consequently I was jittery by eight. At ten past eight my brother strolled by me whistling and as he went out the door, said, "As long as you're going to be at home, why not make some candy for me?" I would have choked him if he had been near enough to me.

The gang came at eight-twenty. We rode out to the barn dance. The fall evening was a chilly one. The moon made the night bright and silvery. Corn stalks were piled in the fields; they looked like Indian wigwams. The car sputtered and came to a complete stop. No gas! I thought, perhaps, after all this wasn't going to be my first dance. A little coaxing and the car started again.

When we hurried into the barn we found that the floor was crowded. After a few dances our attention was drawn to a man who announced that there would be a few dance contests. The couples who entered the contest whirled away. The pair who won received an Irish setter for the prize. If I could win a dog I would certainly show my family that I danced fairly well. The next dance was a polka and as I had learned it in gym at school I felt quite confident of myself. It took a lot of salesmanship to persuade Dick to enter the contest, but finally he did. At first the staring eyes of the people watching us bothered me, but I soon became so much interested in dancing that I didn't notice them. The couples were thinned out until only Dick and I remained. The man called us up on the platform. I could see the amazed expressions on the gang's faces as we hurried up the stairs.

"Here's your well-earned prize," the man said beaming. It was a Leghorn chicken—alive.

The detail with which the writer has related his activities makes *By the Babbling Brook* an interesting narrative. His experience does not quite come to life in the telling. Although he has used many specific details, he has not recorded many strong sensory impressions.

By the Babbling Brook

Dennie and I had planned on this trip for a long time. It was to be just an overnight hike to the same place Vance W. and I had camped the year before.

As I worked until six o'clock on Saturdays, Dennie would have to go out in the afternoon and pitch camp and have things in order. Therefore I had my brother help me pack my equipment at noon Saturday, and then he drove Dennie and all the grub, etc., out as close to camp as he could get the car. The rest of the way they packed the stuff in. My brother helped pitch the tent and unpack things. The two of them went hunting for a while and then my brother drove home.

When I was through work at six o'clock I went home and put on the clothes I used for hunting and camping trips and started out. All I had to carry with me was my rifle, revolver, and hunting knife.

It was seven miles out, but I made good time. It was dark by the time I got there. Dennie had a nice fire going and was waiting supper for me. We had a squirrel, fried, that Dennie had shot that afternoon, boiled potatoes, roasted corn and fresh tomatoes with bread and coffee. That supper sure tasted good after the seven mile hike.

After the supper dishes were washed and put away we took a blanket and went to get some straw. We hauled straw until about twelve o'clock. Then we piled it all in the tent. It reached over halfway to the peak. We then spread a

blanket on top and crawled in to pack the straw down. We got it packed down to about one foot thick and then made our bed on that.

Dennie built the fire up with some back-logs so it would burn for a long time, while I loaded the shot gun and his rifle. We then went out to the lake armed with a flashlight, a shot gun, and a rifle. The lake was a large pond, fed by many springs and bordered by rushes and cat-tails. It was an ideal place for ducks and was always inhabited by numerous mud-hens, or "Hell-divers." Having crawled up on the highest bank (about fifteen feet over the lake level) we watched from there for about ten minutes. Then we saw it move. Dennie shone the flashlight (a big five cell outfit) on it. There were three ducks huddled together. I took the rifle and shot the head off the largest one. The others flew away before I could bring the shot gun into use. By using the shot gun first I might have merely wounded one or two and they might have merely gotten away. That was not my way of doing things. We had made a raft some months before and I stripped and boarded the raft to go after the duck. The raft was pretty well water soaked by this time so I finally had to wade out after the duck. Now that I think of it, wading out after a dead duck at two o'clock in the morning is quite an odd thing to do. It was fun anyway. We went back to camp (only about half a block away from the lake) and I dried off and went to bed. Dennie picked and cleaned the duck and put it in a can of fresh water. This he buried in the water of the "Babbling Brook" (the Babbling Brook was the little stream thus named, which ran by our selected camping place), and he also went to bed.

We were up bright and early the next morning. I, being the cook, prepared a pancake batter and we had pancakes, bacon and eggs, buns and coffee for breakfast. A meal in camp tastes better than any other meal cooked, I think. Anyway, this breakfast sure tasted good.

We hunted for gophers, "Hell-divers," hawks, rabbits, etc., during the morning. As it neared noon we went to a farm house (very good friends of ours lived there) and got some more corn, tomatoes, eggs and milk. Then I prepared dinner. You know, up north where I come from people are plainer. Up there they have breakfast, dinner, and supper. Down here in Minneapolis it's always breakfast, lunch and dinner. Anyway I prepared a dinner of fried duck, mashed potatoes and gravy, pork and beans, fresh tomatoes, bread, cake and doughnuts and milk with a bottle of beer for each of us. I'm telling you—that was one swell feed.

After lying around for an hour or so we washed everything, dishes, frying pans, coffee pot, etc., packed all our equipment and piled it up ready for the car and my brother. Then we went hunting again. About four o'clock we returned to camp and waited for him to show up. He came about five o'clock and helped pack everything in the car and we left for home. We were gone only one night and a day but we had plenty of fun.

Examples of narratives would not be complete without the story of a hunting trip. This one is rather well written. The description of the return to camp, however, ought to have been presented with a little more detail.

My First Hunting Trip

Outline

- I. Packing our supplies into our car.
- II. Arrival at Jimmy Dunn's hunting lodge.
- III. Tracking the deer.
 - (a) Killing my first deer.
 - (b) Skinning the deer before returning to camp.
- IV. Hiking back to camp.
 - (a) Carrying the quartered deer.
 - (b) Feeling upon arriving at camp.

The car was packed and our big adventure was about to begin. We had included guns, ammunition, clothes, and, most important of all, a plentiful supply of food. After three hours of riding through the pine-studded North Shore wilderness, our party arrived at Jimmy Dunn's hunting lodge just in time to see the sun setting over Sea Gull Lake.

Refreshed by a good night's sleep, we made an early start the next morning. A light snow was falling which made it perfect for tracking the deer. It was truly a morning to stir the blood of any boy, even if he were not embarking on his first real big game expedition.

Accompanied by our guide, we traversed several miles without any luck. Finally my big moment came. Just as we approached a swamp, a big buck deer bounded across the clearing. He had almost reached the other side before I could draw a rather steady bead on him. With the crack of the gun, the buck bounded into the air and fell to the ground—dead.

The guide hurriedly skinned and quartered my prize. We strapped the pieces on our backs and began our long trek back to Dunn's lodge. It was the longest three miles that I have ever walked. With one hundred pounds of venison on my back, I had to plow through snow and thick, almost impassable, foliage and woods. We also had to cross one swamp. With every step I took, I would sink above my ankles into the soft swamp ground. Every step seemed to double the weight of my already heavy load. I made no complaints, maybe because of my joy in shooting my first deer, but when we arrived at the lodge some three hours later, I couldn't conceal my exhaustion any longer. I was really a tired young man.

I was probably the happiest, proudest, and most tired out sixteen year old boy in Minnesota that night. That two hundred and twenty pound buck shot on my first trip gained me the praise of the other hunters of the camp. It has left me

a perfect impression of a camp, a boy, and his first deer—a treasure indeed.

Lacking any plot, *Mistaken Identity*, is not a short story. It does illustrate excellently, however, the procedure that has been discussed in this chapter. If anything mars this delightful anecdote it is the rather excessive use of adjectives. The specific and concrete details are good.

PAINTERS MISS ADDRESS, WORK ON WRONG HOUSE

St. Louis, July 16.—(AP)—Mrs. E. G. Heire's suburban flat appeared bright on one side today but drab on the other—painters missed the correct address by one block.

Arriving unannounced, the painters took down the awnings and screens and began painting. Mrs. Heire looked on pleasingly and spoke kindly of the landlord. Later, however, one of the painters told her: "We are sorry, but we have made a mistake."

The painters moved on, after having painted the window frames on one side of the house, a side door and the back porch.

Mistaken Identity

The rattly, blue Ford truck jerkily wheezed to a stop at the curb. A tall, lean man clad in a white painter's suit eased himself out. Shading his eyes with a huge, tanned, hairy hand, he peered at the shiny tin house numbers on the little bungalow, whose once creamy white paint had long since turned grey.

"Yup, this here's the place," he announced in a deep bass voice. "662, that's what he said. It certainly looks like it could stand some paint too."

His companion was already scrambling out from under the smoothly worn steering wheel of their ancient vehicle. He was a long-legged slender boy with a large shock of straw-colored hair. "Yah, I guess this is it, all right."

Working together in quick well-practiced precision, the pair stripped the old truck of its heavy load of painters' supplies, long ladders, huge thick planks, and gray, paint-spattered strips of canvas. The boy set a tall ladder, plentifully splashed with green and brown, against the side of the small bungalow. Near it his companion piled several large cans of paint, labeled "Pea Green." From his many large pockets the older of the two pulled a variety of brushes, some old, some new, some of uncertain age. These he dropped conveniently near the paint.

"Say, Bill, it's funny nobody's here to tell us what they want," said the younger of the two workmen. "Most times they're right on the spot to watch us."

"Oh, well, maybe they think we can get along by ourselves," answered Bill. "Come here, Bud. Lend a hand with this awning. We'll have to take down these screens too."

Soon the gaudy green and orange striped awnings lay on the smooth, well-cared-for lawn. Half the black, slightly rusted window screens were already off when the big oaken front door squeakily opened and a short, gray-haired woman stepped out into the brilliant sunshine. She wore a long, flowered house coat and her bare feet were thrust into well-worn black house slippers. Evidently the noisy removal of her awnings had brought her outside before she was ready to go out of doors that morning. An expression of surprise crossed her kindly face to be followed by one of pleasure as she saw the men.

"Good morning," she said. "Isn't it a beautiful day? I'm Mrs. Heire. Did he finally decide the house needed paint?"

"Oh, good morning, ma'am," said Bill, pausing to lay down the big front-window screen that he held. "Yah, he called up yesterday. Said to begin this morning. Needs paint bad too." He stood back and gravely inspected the peeling flakes of paint on the window frame. He flicked off a particularly loose bit with a grimy finger nail. "This house should have been gone over last year already."

"It's funny he didn't call up and tell us he was going to send you men today. I suppose he was busy though. What color are you going to use?"

Mrs. Heire stooped slightly to read the label on one of the cans of paint. "Pea green," she murmured. "I hope it looks all right. I never cared much for that color, but I guess I can stand it."

Bill was already on his knees as she re-entered the house, and, using for the purpose an old, bone-handled jack-knife, he was prying off a can cover. With a long, smooth stick he carefully stirred the oily, sticky paint, thoroughly scraping the sides and bottom of the can. Bud set the largest ladder against the side of the small glassed-in back porch. "I'll take this and you can take the windows. How about it?"

"That's all right by me, Bud," answered Bill.

Soon the paint was mixed to Bill's satisfaction and the two set to work. With swift, sure, effortless strokes Bud quickly blotted out the dirty, grey paint on the back porch with a slick smooth coating of fresh green. Bill had meanwhile renewed the beauty of one hitherto paintless window frame and was starting on the second one.

The hot sun crept higher and higher into the sky as the men worked. The neighborhood gradually aroused itself from its early-morning lethargy. A heavy wheeled junk-dealer's wagon rattled slowly past in the shaded street. The inevitable band of curious-minded neighborhood children came to lean

solemnly against the white picket fence enclosing the yard to watch the house acquire a new green appearance.

"Hey, Bill," called Bud, from the back porch where he was rapidly obliterating the last forlorn patch of grey. "I'm done here. Want me to help with the windows? Then we can both start the house together."

Before Bill could answer, the big front door swung open again to emit the master of the house. He was slightly taller than his wife, and almost entirely devoid of hair. He was obviously just finishing his late breakfast, judging from the erratic wagging of his freshly shaved lower jaw, and was having difficulty in adjusting the collar of his fresh white suit coat. He absent-mindedly scooped up the still folded morning paper from the grey stone steps. Despite his obvious haste, however, Mr. Heire stopped abruptly to inspect the work of the two painters.

"Good morning, good morning," he said in a professionally cheerful voice. "Quite a job, isn't it? Certainly needs painting bad. I've been after him for a long time to have it done. You know landlords, though. Always take their time about everything."

"I guess you're right about that," agreed Bill, pausing with a brushful of green paint suspended perilously in mid-air. "Most of 'em don't get around to anything if they can help it. Mr. Brown, though, he's pretty good compared to a lot of 'em. We've done a lot of work for him before."

"You mean Mr. Deitrick. Well, he's not so bad, but—"

"Mr. Deitrick? Who're you talking about? Mr. Brown called us about this job. Called last night about six. Told us to come first thing this morning. He hasn't any agent that I know of, either." Bill slowly backed down the tall ladder till he stood on the sidewalk beside Mr. Heire, who was forced to look up to his face. Bill suddenly folded up his long length to lay the now dripping paint brush atop an unopened paint can at his feet.

"Let's get this straight," continued Bill, straightening up to tower over the short householder. "This is 662, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered the nervously excited Mr. Heire. "But we rent from a J. L. Deitrick. Office's down in the Pioneer Building. I never heard of Brown before."

Bud had already stopped painting to hear what was going on. "Here, I've got the number written on a paper," he said. He dug deep into his hip pocket and then ran an exploratory finger into his small watch pocket and produced a crumpled scrap of ruled writing paper.

Bill took it from him and deciphered the scribbled writing. "562. Say, we made a mistake. We should be down in the next block." He crumpled the paper again with his big fist and thrust it into his capacious side pocket.

"Sorry, Mr. Heire," he said. "We got started on the wrong house. Come on, Bud, we've got to get these awnings back up."

"But, but,—say, you can't do this," remonstrated the now thoroughly aroused Mr. Heire. "What'll it look like, half painted like that?" He waved an all-inclusive arm at his painted-in-spots home. The freshly painted back porch glistening in the sun seemed oddly unrelated to the drab main part of the house. One bright rectangle of green stood boldly around a window set in a dirty grey background. Next to it a half-painted green frame waited forlornly for the painter's finishing touches.

"I can't help it," replied Bill, from the ladder where he was screwing on a gayly-colored awning. "I'm getting paid for painting 562, not this house."

Bud was already piling ladders, paint cans, canvas and planks onto the overworked Ford truck. In a moment Bill joined him with a huge armload of canvas and a handful of unused brushes. Bud slid into the worn leather seat under the old steering wheel and his tall companion folded himself up beside him. The wheezing old Ford chugged off down the street leaving an exasperated householder expostulating to

his indignant wife about landlords, paint on the wrong house, painters in general, and two painters in particular.

A Short Story

No one on the boat knew they were honeymooners. A few, perhaps, did not know they were married. Those who stopped to notice at all thought there was something queer about Price and something a little lonely about Ellen. He left her so much alone.

Late one afternoon Ellen lay relaxed and listless in her deck chair. She watched the changing streaks of color in the sky. How marvelous, she thought, to see every shade of every color used together without discord. She lay with her eyes half closed in a kind of enchantment and fancied herself an element in the mixing tones of red and orange and the pure deep blue of ocean and sky. The dreaming imagery broke suddenly when Ellen heard a shallow companionable voice saying, "Good evening, Miss. I suppose you are waiting for your uncle. I saw him down in the bar."

"Oh, he isn't my uncle," said Ellen. "He's my husband. He's taking me to America to live." She'd talked so little to anyone since she boarded the ship that she looked at the woman with an almost grateful smile. Her companion was a large, middle-aged woman in a bright flowered chiffon dinner gown. There were several long ropes of crystal beads around her neck. She sat down heavily in the deck chair beside Ellen and eased her heels out of green kid pumps. Her oriental perfume created a dissonance with the sweet purity of the evening air. Looking at her face, Ellen saw curly "touched-up" hair, mild blue eyes with mascaraed lashes, pink cheeks and a small painted mouth. The woman reached out a round jewelled hand to Ellen's arm and said, "So you're really married to him, eh, dearie? I suppose you and your husband have travelled a good deal?"

Ellen answered, "This is the first time I have been away

from England . . . No, not London. I was born on a farm in Shropshire."

Skillfully the woman maneuvered her questions around to the circumstances of Ellen's unusual marriage. She had never thought of naive simplicity as a virtue. In her circle it was a weakness that made you vulnerable to prying questions. She found it easier than she had expected to lead Ellen on. For half an hour the woman's sympathetic ear encouraged Ellen to talk and after a while Ellen said thoughtfully, "Well, I suppose you would wonder how I met him—so far away from all society. You see, he was travelling alone through England to recover his health. One day he stopped and asked my father for a place to stay for a few months. He has a very nervous temperament." Then quite softly she said, "I hope to give him as much peace and happiness as I can."

At that moment Ellen saw Price walking rapidly toward her. Without noticing the strange woman, he said, "Ellen, I must talk to you immediately. Come with me." He seemed excited. Inside the quiet, softly lighted blue room, he clutched her shoulders in his powerful, long fingers, and peering into her face, he said, "You are not to speak to strangers on this boat. Some of them are plotting against my business interests—probably against my life. You must not speak to anyone." His eyes, so near to hers, glittered, yet were vague and staring.

Ellen was frightened. She had never seen her husband so uncontrolled. Still, intuitively she knew she must not defend her action but only quiet his frenzied excitement. When she led him to his bed she found him strangely acquiescent and somewhat weak. She helped him lie down, took off his shoes, and held his feverish hand for an indefinite time. All audible activity on the ship had stopped. She heard only the constant rolling murmur of the quiet water. Price slept. Ellen was cold and stiff; she bent her head to Price's pillow and wept.

In New York Ellen's bewilderment at the city pleased Price.

For three days he took her to plays and on shopping expeditions and bought her quantities of beautiful things. He took her to brilliant, noisy night-clubs where he drank a good deal and told her passionately that she was the sweetest girl in the world and that he wished he could keep her with him forever. After three days of mad activity Ellen was unutterably tired. She longed to sit quietly and talk with someone. In her mind there was a growing unrest about Price. She worried about him constantly—wondered why he had not introduced her to any of his friends.

Established at last in Price's spacious country home, Ellen's life assumed a kind of routine tranquillity. She trained herself to accept the fact that she was growing farther away from Price, that there was almost no understanding friendship between them, and that her happiness must depend on her own independence and her ingenuity. She could not, however, account for the subtle unhappy fear that lay so heavy inside her. Rapidly she was losing the ability to calm Price when he was irritable. She could no longer speak to him gently and lovingly and leave him quiet and resting. She found herself inwardly shrinking away from him, and hoping she would be spared his violent moods.

Every morning soon after eight o'clock Price drove to an office in Wall Street. He never told Ellen what his business was or anything about his activity away from home. He never asked her what she did with her days either nor made any provision for her to work or play or meet new people. One morning before he drove away she said, "Price dear, I want a dog so much—will you bring me one?" Price's eyes snapped angrily as he looked at her. He said nothing. Ellen felt a sickening quiver of fear though she looked perfectly calm. She realized that all of his behavior toward her proved that he was jealous of any interest outside himself. Yet that evening he brought her a shining, red-brown cocker spaniel. She didn't know how starved she had been for something to

love her until the dog gave her all the devotion and affection he was capable of. He licked her hand at every opportunity and looked at her with complete worshipping admiration. Ellen came to depend on his companionship. Every happy contented moment she had was with him. It frightened her to think she might some time lose him.

Ellen's feeling for Price had changed in three months from that first worshipping admiration to awed respect to its present unchanging state of helpless fright. For some time she had known he was mad. She felt it more strongly than ever as she sat across from him at breakfast one morning. It was eight-thirty and still he was in his smoking jacket and slippers. He was always dressed early in order to leave for town immediately after breakfast. Yet she could not even mention this fact nor ask if he were ill.

Suddenly he raised his head and seemed to look at her—she was never sure—and said, "I'm not going to town today. I have several more important things to do. Let's go for a ride up to the St. Croix bluffs. I want to show them to you and tell you something on the way. We'll take your dog." This was his longest and friendliest speech to Ellen in three weeks. Yet it failed to warm her; indeed it only increased that dread, unreasoning fear that seemed to choke her.

Without answering him she ran upstairs for her warm sweater and the spaniel's leash. From her bedroom window she whistled for the dog. She put on her heavy walking shoes and took two clean handkerchiefs out of a drawer. In a moment she and the dog were waiting on the porch. Quietly she dug her fingers into his soft warm neck where he liked it most. She reflected absently that the flowers in the carefully tended garden were more fragile, more curly-eyed, and more beautiful than any she had grown in England. Childishly she thought it would be nice to transplant them to her own yard at home. Soon Price came out and without any conversation they drove off. The lovely summer countryside

reminded Ellen of the peace of summer at home. She felt like crying.

The speedometer said sixty-five and Ellen was not sure Price was watching the road. After several more miles he said, "Ellen, if I didn't tell you, someone else would. I am faced with the unusual duty of disposing of one wife before the law discovers I have two. You are a refreshingly sweet little girl, Ellen, but if I must choose between you and Christa, I'll keep her, of course. I could never love you as deeply as I love Christa. Her boat docks from Bermuda tonight. I must be there. The violence of my solution may perhaps be regretted, but I shall soon forget it with Christa."

Ellen looked at him wildly. This was the culmination of her fear of Price. She did not cry or speak or even breathe. In a stupid paralysis she was conscious of the abstract loveliness of the sunshine on blue and purple rocks but hardly conscious of their stopping and his quiet order to follow him out of the car. As if it were not she, she felt him lightly holding her wrist and saw him hurl her wild-eyed cocker spaniel over the cliff. With a remote anguish she saw his long ears flying, his four feet stretched out stiff to push the leaping rocks away. His puppy whine distorted itself into a wail and she saw him fall and cry and die. When with agile quickness Price took her other wrist, she experienced a fleet relief; she knew that at last she would escape the fascination of this fiend.

The sun cast long tree shadows across the crag. A breeze whispered in the trees and rocks. Price stood on the cliff with his arms hanging at his sides. His face, as always, was vague and inscrutable. He may have heard a choking scream and seen two beautiful lifeless bodies. You couldn't be sure. Then he got into his car and drove the hundred miles to the pier which would receive Christa's boat.

Suggested Problems

Select one of the situations that are listed below and retell the incident mainly as a dialogue. Some of the background must be filled in by a few brief descriptive details. Be sure to give the accompanying gestures.

1. A small formal dinner party at the home of a young woman is suddenly interrupted by a stream of water spurting upon the dinner table from a nearby radiator. Tell what the guests said and did to stop the leak. What were the looks upon the faces of the guests as the water first splashed upon them?
2. A young couple are returning in the late evening from a dance. The car sputters and stops. The young man discovers that there is no gasoline in the tank. The nearest filling station is five miles away. The road they are on is but infrequently travelled by other cars at this hour. What do they say? How do they finally decide to get gasoline?
3. A very small man rounding the corner of a building suddenly runs sharply into a very large man rounding the same corner from the opposite direction. The little man manages to keep his feet; the larger man falls down. What do they say and do? How do they look?
4. Sue is entertaining a group of girls by mimicking Helen, who Sue thinks is not nearby. Helen is nearby and suddenly enters the group and actively resents the remarks. What are the facial expressions? What do the girls say and do? Sue has to face Helen, of course; can you make Sue smooth Helen's feelings and avoid apologizing?
5. A man drives into a filling station and wants five gallons of gasoline. He is in a hurry and asks the attendants not to bother checking the oil, cleaning the windshield, etc. The attendants are polite but insist upon

completing these services. What does the man, now irate, say and do? How do the attendants succeed in doing what they wish?

Selected References

The student is urged to add to the above discussion concerning the writing of narrative by consulting the following excellent treatises: Chapters VIII and IX in *Composition for College Students* by J. M. Thomas, F. A. Manchester, and F. W. Scott, and Chapter V in *College Composition* by Charles Sears Baldwin. The chapters in both books are interestingly and clearly written.

CHAPTER VIII

THERE IS NO ENDING

In Retrospect

Our discussions began, in Chapter I, with a consideration of the very real interest we have in specific and concrete details and with the realization that we perversely avoid using them; hence we do not say what we mean. If we enjoy talking merely for the sake of talking we do not like to say explicitly what we mean, because we may feel that our conversation will die suddenly. Further, we may feel that if we follow all of the directions that have been given in the various chapters we shall be ungenerous. Students have protested that if they said continually exactly what they meant they would have no friends left! How quick we human beings are to try to improve our friends' conduct! The discussions in this book have been offered that we might better *understand* each other, not to attempt to *remold* the other according to our own notions. No, the recommendations that have been given you suggest that by using a few more words we avoid the often irritating necessity for using many, many more words. Reducing all of this to the utmost simplicity, we see that it amounts to saying, for example, "Please hand me the *telephone directory*," instead of, "Please

hand me the *directory*," when a city directory and a telephone directory hang side by side from a book.

We may resent the insistence that we say what we mean, because our natural human inclination is to avoid hard work, and careful thinking is hard work. For some reason our emotions have the upper hand much of the time; our likes and dislikes make us condemn a person, a book, or a law, without any real facts at our command on which to base a sound judgment. We resent having to explain what we mean, because then our actual ignorance would stand revealed. We prefer to hint darkly, to use generalizations and let the listener form his own judgment.

But having facts is not alone sufficient. Facts must be selected and combined to make ideas and impressions clear. Throughout the book you have been urged to *select* and *control* the details that you use. The importance of selection of details, either specific or concrete, cannot be emphasized too much. A controlling idea determines not only the selection but the resultant combination of details, and the juxtaposition of details is tremendously significant, as we saw in Part III of Chapter IV. Two newspaper items were brought to my attention recently as I discussed this point with some friends. The first item reported the death of an unidentified young woman in a shabby rooming house. The last line of the report read, "The police found an empty whiskey bottle in the closet." There was no apparent reason for including that line, but the unkind suggestions of it are evident.

The second newspaper item had to do with the same event. Here the reporter had seen a "human interest" story, and he dwelt at length upon the pathos of the young girl's starving to death away from friends. He pictured her cooking over an old kerosene lamp, and tried to re-create the last pathetic hours. He dramatized the empty lamp and her empty life. "What must her thoughts, her feelings have been," he wrote, "as she emptied the last few drops of kerosene from the old whiskey bottle into her lamp?" What a different meaning the detail now has! The same detail has been controlled to convey a different, and probably more truthful, impression.

If what has been said is true, then why has the emphasis been made from time to time in our discussions upon the *artificiality* of these methods? Why have you been warned that at first your writing might be as melodramatic as that appearing in the cheaper magazines, the "pulp"? The explanations that follow may at first thought appear to contradict all that has been said. You will not feel a contradiction, however, if you realize that what you have studied is a *basis* for good writing. Good writing goes beyond.

It should be evident from what has been written above that the interpretation of facts is more important than merely the presentation of the facts themselves. Facts we must have; but *we must not give too many of them in our writing!*

Let us examine the frontispiece of this book. The "Portrait of a Scientist" is from a photograph and has

the softness of outline and detail which we associate with a charcoal drawing; yet the negative from which this was made had all of the sharpness we find in photographers' "proofs," those pink-hued pictures from which we select the one we want "finished." The softening of the details had the curious effect of *sharpening the impression*. Do you understand this? By having fewer details, the picture gives a more precise interpretation! We are not here concerned with the presentation of scientific facts and interpretations; we are concerned with what perhaps is the artistic, that is, with the creative effort that appears in poetry, novels, essays, and plays, where we try to delve into the complexities of human life to give them meaning.

In your first exercises you were expected to give every single detail that would possibly contribute to your impression; in Chapter III you were expected to give the same abundance of detail in regard to the controlling idea. It is true that you were directed to leave out details that did not contribute to the impression or idea, but in the main you were told that the more details you had the better. The result of such intensive attention to details may have placed you in bondage to them. Many students have found themselves afraid to depart by the slightest after they have studied the procedures for several weeks. They wrote long papers that were as syrupy as their shorter papers. And *syrupy* is the word, so thick with adjectives were all of the sentences.

The devices of Chapters II and III were intended to

remove vague generalities, but they were never intended to make students so bound by the consideration of concrete details that they could not for the rest of their lives write general statements at all. The best suggestion for breaking away from the undesirable qualities is for the student to experiment with other forms of description and exposition. If, for example, he will try to write impressionistic description instead of simply impersonal description, he may achieve quite different effects. The fragment that is quoted below may suggest the contrast between these two types. Although the writer begins with good concrete details, he soon uses abstractions to give the mood.

Black is the Color of Night

The murky light falls in splotched pools on the dingy, shadowed walls of the street. The locked shops appear as a line of distant skulls, set with staring, cavernous eye-sockets of the window fronts. Along the gutters, scraps of torn newspapers and jagged fragments of twisted box-coverings are the only whiteness in the night-filled street.

. . . The pinlike scampering of a midnight marauder is heard. From behind a sour-smelling refuse can the wet beads of a sleek rat's eyes can be seen. The rat darts hungrily at the swollen heart of the night.

.
The hour has lost identity in temporal reckonings . . . The hour, the night, the darkness, the stillness convolves into a peculiar entity—standing apart—unacknowledgeable from and to the rigid disciplines of Time.

Over all this is a deep, secret sense of a mysterious oneness . . . of a closeting from Time in an engulfing sweep of a nameless possession . . . of a seizure from Reality and Mind

. . . of a growing into Consciousness that whirls through the night thickness to the light of an iridescent moon . . . that whirls . . . spins . . . higher . . . faster . . . past far orbs and spheres and planets . . .

higher

faster

spinning. . . .

The paper continues until the rhythms grow stronger and stronger and become free verse, a portion of which will be quoted later.

Perhaps to call this impressionistic description is confusing, since in Chart B one column had the heading "Impression." Well, in that device (it was labeled *artificial*, you remember), we were trying to give a bucketful of the impression, as it were. We tried to present a definite *amount* of heat, fatigue, hope, or whatever the impression might be. To give the definite amount or degree, we made a word-picture that contained just that. In impressionistic description, we try to express how complex our emotions are. When we look at a haying scene, we might have the predominate impression of heat, but we would not, being human, have *only* that impression. It would be all mixed up with *pity* for people working in such a heat, *disgust*, perhaps, that we had wandered out into it, and *fear* that we might have a sunstroke. In other words, we would have many emotions that we might want to portray. The impressionistic description tries to portray many emotions at once, and to do this uses portions of many images.

For example, Stephen Crane in his short story, "The Open Boat," describes the scene from the boat on the waters as from a balcony, and then he shifts as to the back of a bucking horse. The writer of impressionism strings many images together in an attempt to give complex feelings, thoughts, and emotions. Abstract words have almost as great a part to play as do concrete words. The composite result of this mixing of images and abstractions gives us somewhat the actual and confused, mixed emotions that we feel, not the more or less unreal single emotion of the kind of description presented in Chapter II.

The example should not send students into writing a flood of such descriptions. They should experiment with many devices.

For further suggestions for getting out of bondage, the student should watch current magazines for examples of excellent writing in which the concrete details are somewhat diluted but contribute, nevertheless, to the effectiveness of the paper.

"Nothing Ever Happens to Me!"

We frequently take refuge in such a remark when we want suggestions for papers and an instructor suggests that we write from our own experiences. If we feel that nothing ever happens to us, we should feel a bit ashamed to say so. The old doctor who haunted the lobby of the Grand Hotel complained that he found life dull because nothing ever happened around him! Readers of Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel* know that thrill-

ing incidents occurred daily. The doctor merely had eyes that did not see, and ears that did not hear. Poor man! He is not unlike the maid of the women's dressing room described by Katharine Brush in *Night Club*, a short story that appears in almost every anthology of short stories. Mrs. Brady finds that the incidents that occur under her nose are most dull and uninteresting. They are, *as she sees them!* Of course, since they are not labeled and do not appear in a *story* (that's the only place that things *happen!*), they pass by her unseeing eyes and leave her bored, so bored that she turns to a magazine. "The magazine was Mrs. Brady's favorite. Its stories were true stories, taken from life (so the Editor said): and to Mrs. Brady they were live, vivid threads in the dull pattern of her night." Hm-m, wedding about to take place (the girl met the man just a few minutes before), a girl who tries to escape through the dressing room, but can't . . . and after she has left, Mrs. Brady discovers that her scissors are gone . . . "Now what for," marvelled Mrs. Brady, "did she want to walk off with them scissors?" and then the girl . . . But *read the story!* Nothing happens to us because, usually, we do not know what *is* happening to us! The *interested* person can make his incidents *interesting*. We must be active ourselves, however, not simply lumps of clay.

Students who write nothing but essays and narratives would—if they acted in all things as they do in writing—wear to a formal party the same clothes that they wear to take a car apart. The different types of writ-

ing, poetry, drama, essay, short story, novel, letter, and all of the various variations of each, grew up because some things can better be expressed in one form than another. Let us take some extreme examples. Though we might convey the majesty of a great mountain peak by painting it in oils or by sketching it in pen and ink, we would produce only an uninteresting relief map if we tried to model the mountain peak in clay. Certainly the medium chosen for expressing our scene must be with a recognition of the characteristics best suited to our purpose.

Where an essay may discuss and explain an idea, the play or the short story may show the idea in action. A single sentence from *Aes Triplex*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, may be said to be demonstrated by the chilling, depressing story, *On the Stairs*, by Arthur Morrison. The sentence from Stevenson is,

The poorest persons have a bit of pageant going towards the tomb; memorial stones are set up over the least memorable; and, in order to preserve some show of respect for what remains of our old loves and friendships, we must accompany it with much grimly ludicrous ceremonial, and the hired undertaker parades before the door.

Morrison depicts in his story the profound fear of an old hag that she would not be able to bury her dying son fitly with "plooms" on the horses' harnesses, and mutes (hired mourners) and many carriages. So fearful is she, she puts into an old teapot the money that is given her by the doctor to buy port wine for her son, mumbling that milk and wine are an "expense." The wine and milk

might have saved her son's life . . . but what is that compared to a glorious funeral!! The story effectively presents the same idea that Stevenson discusses, but the appeal is entirely different.

Disraeli once said that adventure is for the venturous, which is just another way of saying that we must have active imaginations. All very well and good, of course, but as Charlie Chan, the Chinese detective of literary fame, remarked, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." What step might be our first? What are some of the manifestations of an active imagination? How, in a word, do we go about it?

Do you recall the illustrations in Chapter II, in which a student selected one detail, a blind man, from his preceding description and expanded that into another description, making this time the blind man the center of interest? That is the sort of activity that shows an alert imagination. Explore every interesting incident until you feel that you have exhausted its possibilities. I sometimes wonder how many accounts of fishing or hunting trips I have read. There must have been actually several thousands of them, yet every one of the accounts approached the subject in the same way: something was caught or shot. Surely the possibilities have not been exhausted there! Many different aspects of the same trip would furnish almost countless subjects for essays, poems or stories. A study of facial expressions while baiting hooks, reeling in a fish, holding a landing net, watching the big one get away, rowing the boat, trying to start the outboard motor, dodging the

splash of water as some careless person throws the anchor overboard instead of dropping it noiselessly into the water—all of these would furnish essay subjects that might be discussed at length.

The alert imagination manifests itself in the attempt to present a common subject from a slightly different point of view from which it ordinarily appears. Again the camera enthusiast has pointed the way. If you examine old photograph albums you will be fortunate to find one picture in a thousand where the camera and the subject are not on the same level, everything squared up precisely, unless by accident a novice tipped the camera. Is this what we find in the parade of pictures before us today? Hardly. The effort to obtain new “camera angles” has led to new and beautiful, as well as grotesque but interesting, effects. In seeking new subjects for writing we will find new experiences, new thoughts and ideas. It is true that our first efforts may be strained, but as we persist we will attain greater skill; our new “angles” will take on greater reality and plausibility.

A word of caution should not be overlooked. Observe that no suggestion has been made that you try to desert *commonplace subjects*. You need not fly to the Moon or to Mars in your search for new material. Do not confuse the use of *imagination* in these pages with *fantasy*. Let us keep this distinction: Imagination bases its activity upon known facts and situations, even as you explored the activities behind the cold facts of a newspaper clipping for the material of your story;

fantasy, on the other hand, attempts to combine facts and ideas in impossible or perhaps improbable ways.

The limitless number of possible subjects upon which to exercise your imagination preclude giving you more than brief suggestive problems.

Suggested Problem

Using some narrative which you wrote at some previous time, find at least two subjects for essays. Write these essays. As you develop the ideas, keep your eyes open for material for a short poem which you could write and insert in one of the essays.

If that seems too difficult, try to rewrite an essay, this time taking a new point of view.

Write a description of a friend; then (and you had better make notes as you think this over) taking into consideration his tendencies of character, write a description of your friend as he might appear twenty years hence.

Perhaps poetry offers the greatest opportunity for imaginative writing, but students run from it as from something unpleasant. I think that if they realized their poetry at first as something personal and for personal expression and not for publication, they would forget their fears of it and not make criticism of it so difficult for teachers. And the fact is that teachers often dread having students bring them poetry for criticism! What a pity this is! The student often feels that his poetical efforts should be treated only with praise because it is Poetry! The teacher is afraid of wounding the sensitive feelings that prompted the poem, yet often knows that unless some of the infelici-

tous expressions are pointed out and corrected the student will be puzzled and hurt by others who may see the poem.

Let us be a little more sensible about it. You have been moved to express an idea in verse. Almost of necessity the idea has been intimate and has affected you more deeply than those ideas which found expression in essays or narratives. Your next instinct is to share your feelings and your expression of them with someone, but perhaps you have overlooked the fact that *sharing* means more than giving something to someone else. It means often partaking of their experiences too. Do not be disappointed to find that the other person has felt the same things and has perhaps given expression to them in much the same way, or even that some great poet has already said what you had to say! Exult in the fact that you have found it by yourself. And if your instructor suggests that you have been so concerned with yourself and your feelings that you have expressed yourself most sentimentally, do not feel that he is being ungenerous. He is trying to help you achieve the highest and most fitting form of intimate revelation. Try to improve your craftsmanship, for you will want many people to see only your most perfect work. Until you achieve greater skill—and many of you will—consider your poetry as very personal expression, as indeed it is. Write poetry. Take it to your instructor (he sees much too little written by students) as to one who would help, not damn, your efforts.

Poetry by its very compactness, by its rhythmic appeal, by its imagery, and by its rather stringent forms, has an appeal that other forms cannot completely achieve. Students frequently shy from poetry because they become entangled in meter and rime. This need not be true. Poetry need not necessarily have a set rhythm or rime. The simple example of a sonnet which follows has two lines that have only four instead of five metrical feet. Very easily could the writer have corrected the form. As a matter of fact, he wrote the poem first much as prose is written and cast it later into the very limited sonnet form.

Spring

A softer breath of a scented strain;
Something we feel but cannot hold;
A glimmer of sun, a dash of cold,
The stirring of life in every vein,
A symbol of things made new again.
An emerald haze, a shower of gold,
An azure sky in a dark brown fold;
Clouds as white as a twisted skein,
And wild geese passing high . . .
The call of a grouse, the whir of a wing.
The quivering violets seem to sign
A murmuring brook, a lamb's low bleating
And side by side the meadows lie—
So runs the melody of spring.

Because we have learned the ballad form from childhood, we frequently write all of our verse in that form, whether we are describing a playful puppy or paying a tribute to our mothers. Just as the different types of

writing cannot well be used for all ideas, so the various types of verse structure cannot well be used for all poetical ideas. The student should experiment with the various forms before he tries to use only one for all purposes. The few quoted below are offered as suggestions.

Frivolity

“My head shall always rule my heart,”

Is what I’ve always said;

When people laughed and joked with me,

I’d nod a knowing head.

The day was hot, and I was bored .

With nothing left to do—

And then he came and laughed and talked,

And my world began anew.

I still insist it was the sun,

And it is that I blame;

But ever since that fateful day

My heart is not the same.

My head is full of whirling thoughts

And lots of queer ideas;

And time just seems to drag for me

Without that voice of his.

My word I’ve kept in all good faith—

My head does rule my heart;

For it is in a constant spin

In which my heart takes part.

Spring Trees

Trees in the Spring

Are like young ladies

With green veils,

Bearing themselves in airy fashion,
Meeting in the churchyard,
In the garden,
Bowling and nodding
To each other.
Arched above the street
They put their green-veiled heads together
And whisper noiseless nothings
About this and that.

(From "Black is the Color of Night")

Night,
Far distances . . .
Sounds
Sounds and senses
No sounds and senses
An unearthly, not-of-this-earth earthliness . . .
Space
Space of limits
Measurable limits . . . limits of time and lines
Lines of all kinds . . . everywhere
Lines of demarcation . . . over continents, countries and cities
Streets are lines . . . lines separating houses and men and
particular hells they wallow in
A street lies in a night-filled denseness
A street that ends on a bunch of cramped piers
A street that is black, brooding and silent
A Man walks with determined, decisive steps
The Man has lived long . . .
For all the time that he has lived,
Life has spared him none of her malicious ingenuities
Walking . . . alone . . .
With the burdening secrets of his existence
His mind circling

Wandering in the unprobable abysses of human thought and
imagery
Mind—
Thought—
The flux and current of mind and thought
The Man is torn and strained by the torrents of jumbled emo-
tions, egotisms, and epithets
Which race through that intermediate form of
Mind, Spirit, and Body
Which is the meeting place for
Intellectualisms, Emotions, and Passions . . .
While the Night watches . . .
And the Wind with a breathy note whistles
As men who are afraid whistle
At darkness.

The two poems that follow were written by one student and are most appealing, perhaps, because of their vivid imagery. The subject matter of both of them, you will notice, is commonplace but is touched by genuine poetic imagination.

Flood Over a Grain Field

The oil-thick yellow water
swirls in slippery, lazy circles.
The leaves and twigs and slimy clay silt
roll and belch and lick my feet
as if the Devil with gleeful wit
stirred his fires in his brim-stone pit
and cackling—insanely chuckling—
saw a hundred body dead spirits, fresh suffering,
smoke—
like green leaves
on a smudge-fire.

The water boiled—
I half expected to see Satan
rear up from the water-boil,
to watch the farmer and laugh.

You know how Satan laughs.

He sounds like the old miser
who lives on our street—laughing when
he pokes his cane at our dog.

The dog bristles up
and snarls and snaps and barks and growls
and whines—because the sight of him
reminds her of the times he has hit her
with his cane
on that vulnerable spot—
the thin-bone of her nose.

God must be away today.

I heard the man say
“God!”—
real anguish in his voice—
“God, see my shocks go!”

I looked—but I could not see God.
I couldn't hear him either,
just the sticky water flowing—
that had such a good hold on the
poor man's once golden grain crop.

He sounded lost, as if the grain
were life—his life—painfully
flowing out from his body,
and he was powerless to stop it.

I felt sorry for the man;
he had worked hard all summer

to get his barley up in shocks,
and now the dark river was taking it
away from him;
taking the grain that later in the fall he would have
worked hard to thresh and haul three miles
in his rough old grain-wagon
if this water hadn't risen so high.

The man kept groaning;
it must have hurt terribly
(like the time
the truck ran over my dog, Bess
and she lay still and groaned
and the blood ran out of her mouth
in dark, shiny strings.
She died.).

I wondered if the man would die.

See—
he waded right into that cold, dirty water—
right into the Devil's arms.

I guess he didn't mean to die, though
but he must have been crazy—
going into the water
for the last shock as it floated past.

It was hard work for him to get back.
He pushed the floating grain bundles
with his arms and chest
he almost had his face buried in it.

That isn't so good either—

I know how barley beads are
when they get inside your clothing.

Down by the River

Down by the river where the cattle go
to drink, when the sun is low,
and the long cool shadows cover half the glen,
and the fork, and the spade, and the hoe—

Oh!

The fork, and the spade, and the hoe,
lean silently against the fence
where the dust of the hot day—still—unstirred,
will soon be disturbed by the cool night breeze,
or swept by the winds of a gray night-bird,
and a perilous, skimming bat.

On my back I lie in the cooling grass
whose color is black, to my red, hot eye,
and the moon turns white when she bids the hills
adieu . . . for a long, cool night.

Oh!

It's down by the river I go
when the afternoon sun is low
and the long, cool shadows cover half the glen,
and I'm through with the spade and the hoe.

And So Farewell

The book ends as it began, trying to help students to use their native language. As with language, as with life, as with people, there is no ending. Graduation is called "Commencement." Much of what has been written in these pages is merely suggestive, for the student must go on from there as far as his interests and abilities lead him. But have courage! Try what you

have feared to try before! Your instructors will be happy to guide you beyond the confines of this book. There are many other books. Read them with a care and respect borne of your experiences in using your native language.



APPENDIX

Because the place colloquial English occupies in modern writing has but only recently been discussed generally, it has appeared advisable to append a few considerations. The discussion given here is most incomplete; the interested teacher or student is, therefore, urged to consult some of the books listed at the end of Chapter IV.

For some reason colloquial English has been considered to be "incorrect" by writers of texts on composition, and students have been unnecessarily penalized for using colloquial expressions even in informal writing. This situation has been deplored by linguists for some time, and it would appear that modifications of our correction of students' papers should be made. I urge only what Dr. C. C. Fries has urged elsewhere: when a student uses naturally a colloquial expression in any but the most formal type of paper, the instructor should not correct the expression as being *wrong*. Let us abandon much of the grammar that is from Latin and try to teach English grammar instead.

Perhaps my point of view will become clearer from the following discussion of certain historical developments in the language.

Bearing always in mind that we must use language with careful discrimination, let us examine some of the words and expressions that have become correct in col-

loquial English. From an examination of them we shall see some implications for our study.

1. She *enthused* about her vacation plans.

Enthused was termed *slang* in the first edition of *Webster's*, but in the second edition, *colloquial*. To some people the word still sounds vulgar, and instead of finding pleasure in having watched the actual creation of a new word and its maturing into youth we remember the time when no one thought of saying anything but

She was enthusiastic about her vacation plans.

Whether we like it or not, words do change their meanings, and new words do come into being. Emotional objections—likes and dislikes—have little to do with the question of *correctness* of language. Likes and dislikes very decidedly have a place in the choice of words for their pleasing effects. And that is not to be overlooked. If we do not like a new word, we need not use it. In hunting for a substitute, we must, nevertheless, be careful to choose a word that conveys our idea and does not displease our reader. We should bear in mind that when we object to a new word or a new meaning we are objecting largely for the reason that the word or meaning is *new*. Do we object to “It is *you*,” to “He slipped on the rock and *landed* in the water,” to “My *shoehorn* is bent,” to “He made a *nice* distinction”?

Probably many of us do not object to the use of the words that are italicized. If we object to change as

such and keep only old meanings, we should resent those uses. *You* in Old English was applied only to many people, not to one. As late as 1660 voices were raised in protest against those idiots who used *you* when addressing one person. Further, *you* was the accusative (objective) case and should not have been used after *it is!* *To land* meant to pass from something that was not land to something that was. *Shoeing horns* were so named because they were made from the split horns of animals. Today they may be made from any material and yet called *horns*. *Nice* in Latin meant ignorant; after changing in meaning from *simple*, *coy*, *fastidious*, to *discriminating*, it took on the meaning we use today, namely, *agreeable* or *pleasant*.

If we protest against some and accept other meanings we should explain why we object to a fifth meaning but not to a fourth! Purists would throttle the very life of the language and prevent it from growing and expanding. This attitude is found in books which we see advertised to give us *the* correct meanings of words.

We have interrupted our listing of words and expressions which only recently have been listed in our dictionaries as being colloquial, that is, proper to cultivated speech. Let us examine the second edition of the unabridged dictionary we named above for further examples. We repeat the list from Chapter IV.

2. *None* of these books *are* good.
3. *Either* of these methods *are* acceptable.

4. He is *kind of* boring.
5. *These kind of* knaves are treacherous.
6. *Who* did you see?
7. There were some of those *whom* we thought would come.
8. *Can* you come to the picnic?
9. He took to figures *like* a duck.
10. The board gave *their* permission for the dance.
11. *Will* you do it? (simple future)
12. *I will loan* you the book. (simple future)
13. The shirt *shrunk*.
14. She *sung* the song very well.
15. Her smile is *intriguing*.
16. *Try and* climb the tree.
17. It is *me*.
18. Dear *me!* (Dear *I?*)

Do not hastily conclude that some of these expressions are *ungrammatical*; grammar *describes* what is actually in the language. Neither *Webster's* nor the *Oxford* dictionaries present evidence that these are incorrect. Some of the expressions listed will cause no comment from some students and teachers. They have used them often. Other expressions may disturb.

Each of the expressions should be examined for the *meaning* that results from the forms listed. If *either* method of two *is* good, does it not follow that *both are* good? Obviously the impulse to say, then, "Either of these methods are acceptable" arose from the feeling of plurality. Examine likewise, *these kind . . . are*, *who* did you see, etc. The violence, we see, is done to the rules of grammar that we learned. Subjects and verbs must agree in person and number. Pronouns

must be in the nominative case if they are the subjects of verbs and in the accusative case if they are objects of verbs or prepositions.

Professor Otto Jespersen comments upon the use of the pronouns as illustrated above in this fashion:

Grammarians have been so severe in blaming this that now many people feel proud when they remember writing *whom* and even try to use that form in speech.¹

Professor Jespersen describes the structure of the language as he finds it. He does not at any time say that so-and-so is right or wrong, for he is aware that a book of grammar is not a book of laws that are to be obeyed but is a record of the manner in which people wrote or spoke up to the time of the publishing of the work. The forms that are not pronouns follow the tendencies of the language to change as people find new needs or means of expression. The supreme achievement of mankind, language, reflects its growth. For this reason, Professor Jespersen does not state the rules concerning the use of the pronouns as usual, i.e., the case of a pronoun like that of a noun is determined by its use in the sentence. His descriptive statement follows:

On the whole, the natural tendency in English has been towards a state in which the nominative of pronouns is used only where it is clearly the subject, and where this is shown by close proximity to (generally position immediately before) a verb, while the objective is used everywhere else.²

¹ Otto Jespersen, *Essentials of English Grammar*, p. 137.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 136.

The questions that have arisen in our discussion of colloquial English result from the fact that English, unlike Latin, is a living language. Colloquial English expressions generally indicate the residue of many expressions that breathed but a short time as slang. In this residue we feel the pulse of the living changes. We should not despise the youth because he is young, but should examine him for the man he is to become. Mature situations require mature materials; profundity of ideas requires formal English. But with the daily needs of language what they are, we may freely use colloquial English, for it fits most of our purposes.

What has been said so far concerning the second level of standards implies that the questions of correctness in language cannot be determined by rule. Since the questions have been taken to a dictionary for answer, let us ask, "What standards do the writers of dictionaries use for determining into what category a word should go?"

In Chapter I a brief description of the methods of gathering items for dictionaries was given. The collecting of material from the writings of English-speaking people was done to determine *usage*, that is, to quote *Webster's*, "long-continued practice; customary mode of procedure or action; custom; habitual use; method." And in the entry under *usage* appears an example of what results from careful study of the items collected: "Though the preponderance of lexical authority is for ūz'ij, investigation shows that ūs'ij strongly prevails in America." *Lexical authority*, of

course, refers to previous writers of dictionaries. Even they must bow before established custom.

The magnitude of the task of completing or revising a large dictionary is tremendous and takes many years. Unabridged dictionaries are, therefore, approximately ten years old by the time they are published. The language does not stop growing between issues of dictionaries, certainly, and since a complete revision of an unabridged dictionary may not take place for half a century, how can we select our words in the interim? New words may be added to reprints and a few new meanings likewise, but dictionaries find almost impossible the task of keeping completely up to date.

Consider the definition of *usage* that was quoted above. A synonymous definition (unfortunately self-defining) might be *often used*. Our conclusion is that often-used words are correctly used, meaning that many people often use the words in a certain fashion. If we consult our dictionary, we find under *due* this surprising statement: "often erroneously used in the phrase *due to* meaning 'because of.' " Erroneously indeed! The statement, you see, contains a direct contradiction.

Again, let us examine *kind*. The note in the entry in *Webster's* states:

From its adjectival force, *kind of* before nouns in the plural came to take incorrectly a construction with verbs, pronouns, demonstratives, etc., in the plural; as these *kind of* knaves.

The writer of that item undoubtedly forgot the standard, namely, usage, by which he was rating words, for he

slipped in the word *incorrectly*, a contradiction, surely, if the word *came to take a construction . . . in the plural!*

. . . a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet.

Let us remember that no matter how a word came to have a meaning, if that meaning has been accepted, it is correct.

Usage, however, is more than a matter of votes. The habits and customs of millions of people and the use by writers of accepted abilities determine what the usage is to be. If this information is not available, we have another source of authority, namely, the patterns of the language.

Suppose we were living at about 1425. According to Professor Charles Carpenter Fries¹ the use of the plural pronouns was about like this:

About 75% of the writers used *they* instead of *he*.

About 50% of the writers used *their* instead of *hir*.

About 25% of the writers used *them* instead of *hem*.

Dr. Fries points out that if this pattern had been clear to an observer of the time, then the intelligent writer, in the interests of consistency and in keeping with the developments of the language, would have used all of the new forms, *they*, *their*, *them*, without waiting for the vote of the majority. Grammar books, had there been any, would have described both the older forms and the

¹ Editor of the *Oxford Early Modern English Dictionary*, and author of *The Teaching of the English Language*.

new ones, but they could not say that one form was wrong and another right.

This method is perfectly sound for us in deciding what new forms we may use. And it is almost our obligation to eke out our dictionary information by careful observation of what is written and spoken today. Suppose we apply the principle to a form that is discussed periodically in the newspapers and magazines. It is *me*. Historically we find the forms of the first and second personal pronouns as follows:

FIRST PERSON		SECOND PERSON	
	OLD ENGLISH	MODERN ENGLISH	
Nominative	ic	I	gē
Genitive	mīn	mine (my)	ēower
Dative	mē	me	ēow
Accusative	mē	me	ēow
			ye
			your
			you
			you

As was pointed out above, the objection to *It is me* lies in the case of *me*, which is dative-accusative. But we notice that custom decreed that the dative-accusative form *you* is correct in the form *It is you*. Since the pattern is identical, I think that we may safely assume that *It is me* is correct. It is an anticlimax to remember that the dictionaries list the expression as being colloquial. Previous editions, however, forbade its use.

The living languages change inevitably just as all other things do, and we must take cognizance of the changes. Careless use of language, however, cannot be condoned. The student who fails to observe current usage in regard to words or phrases can expect only

censure. He must not seize upon forms merely because they are new any more than he must avoid them for the same reason. His determination of what is fitting should be based upon a sensitivity growing out of continual effort to write clearly and pleasingly, of continual alertness to what cultivated people say and write.

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